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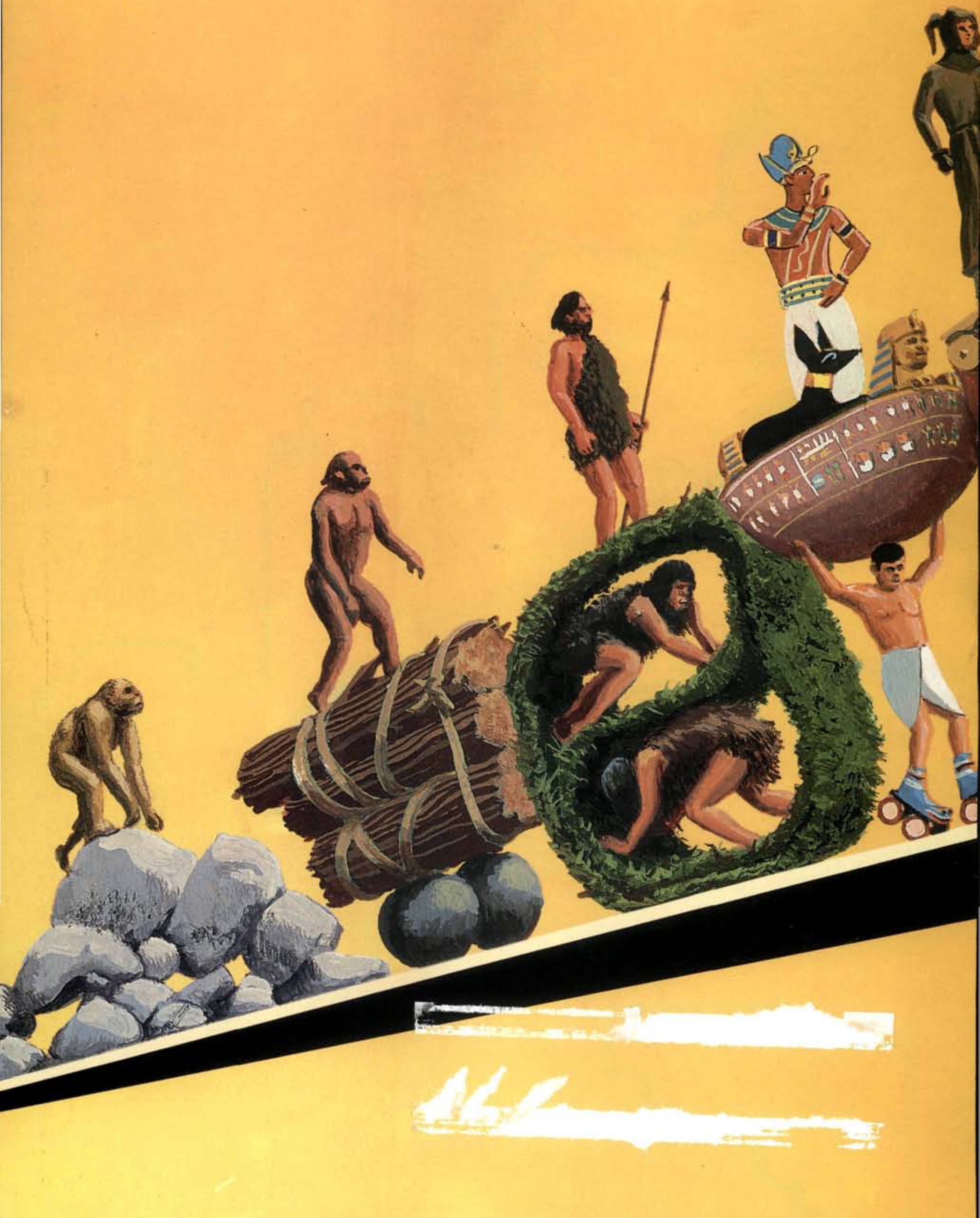

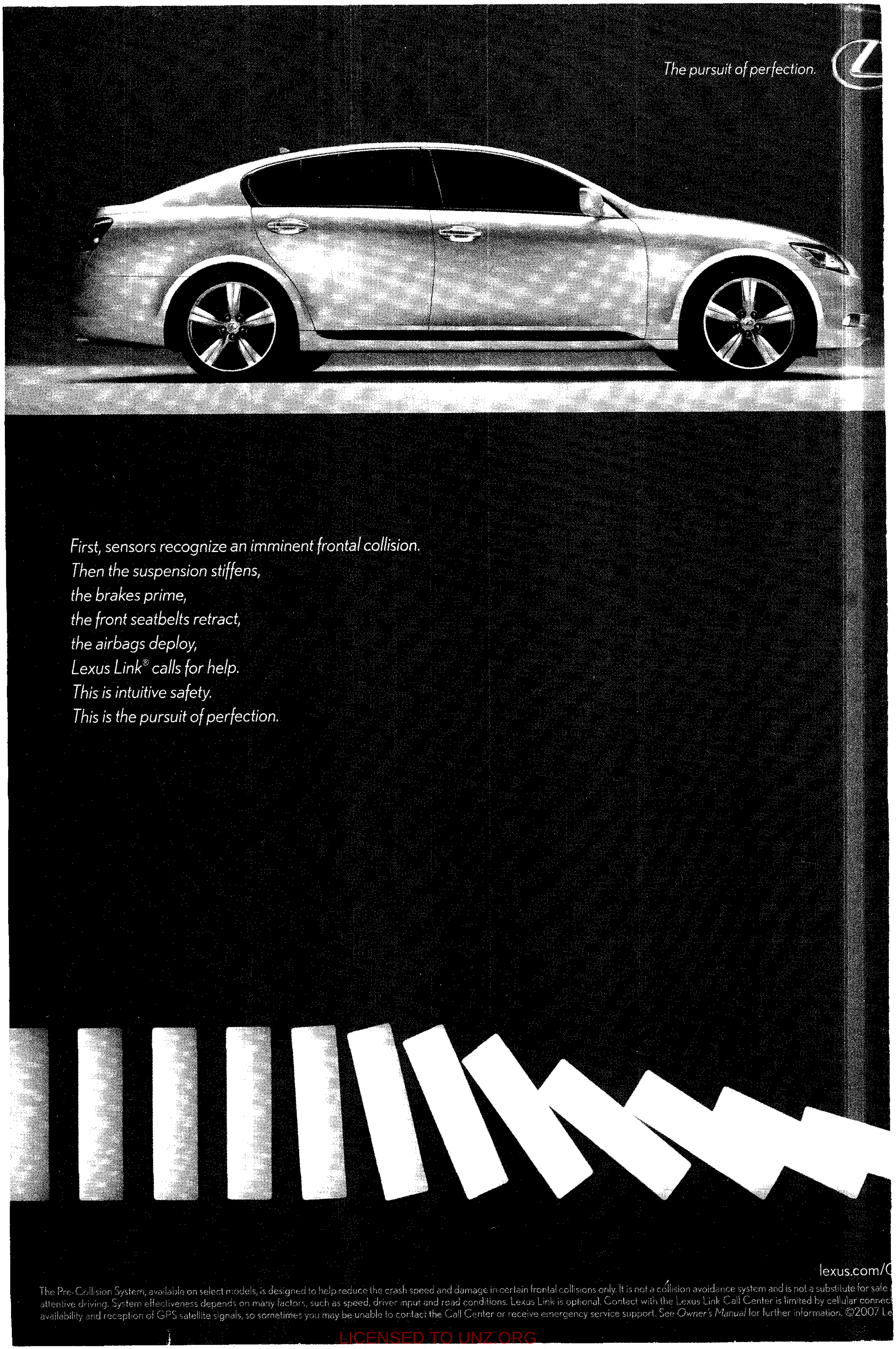

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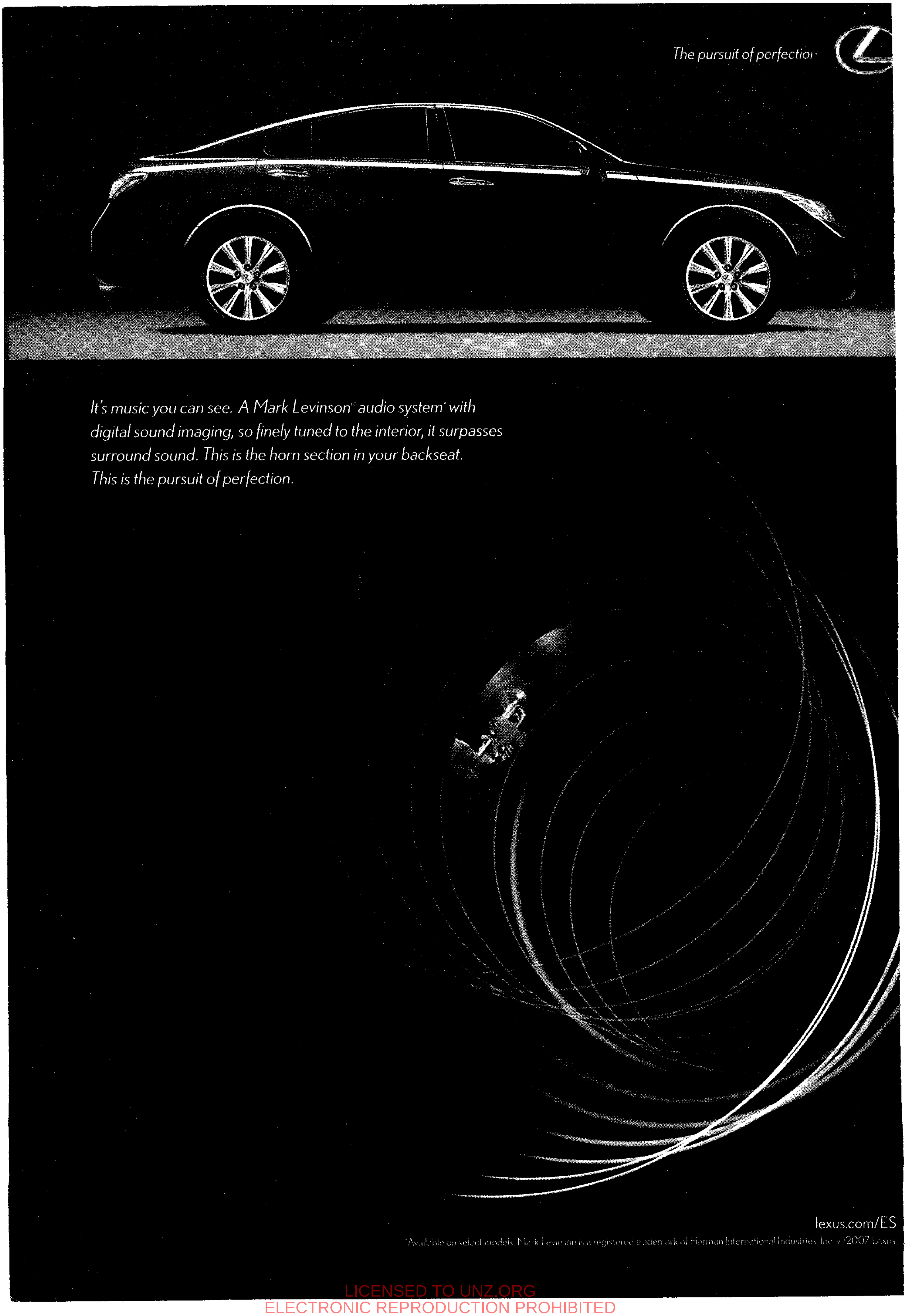

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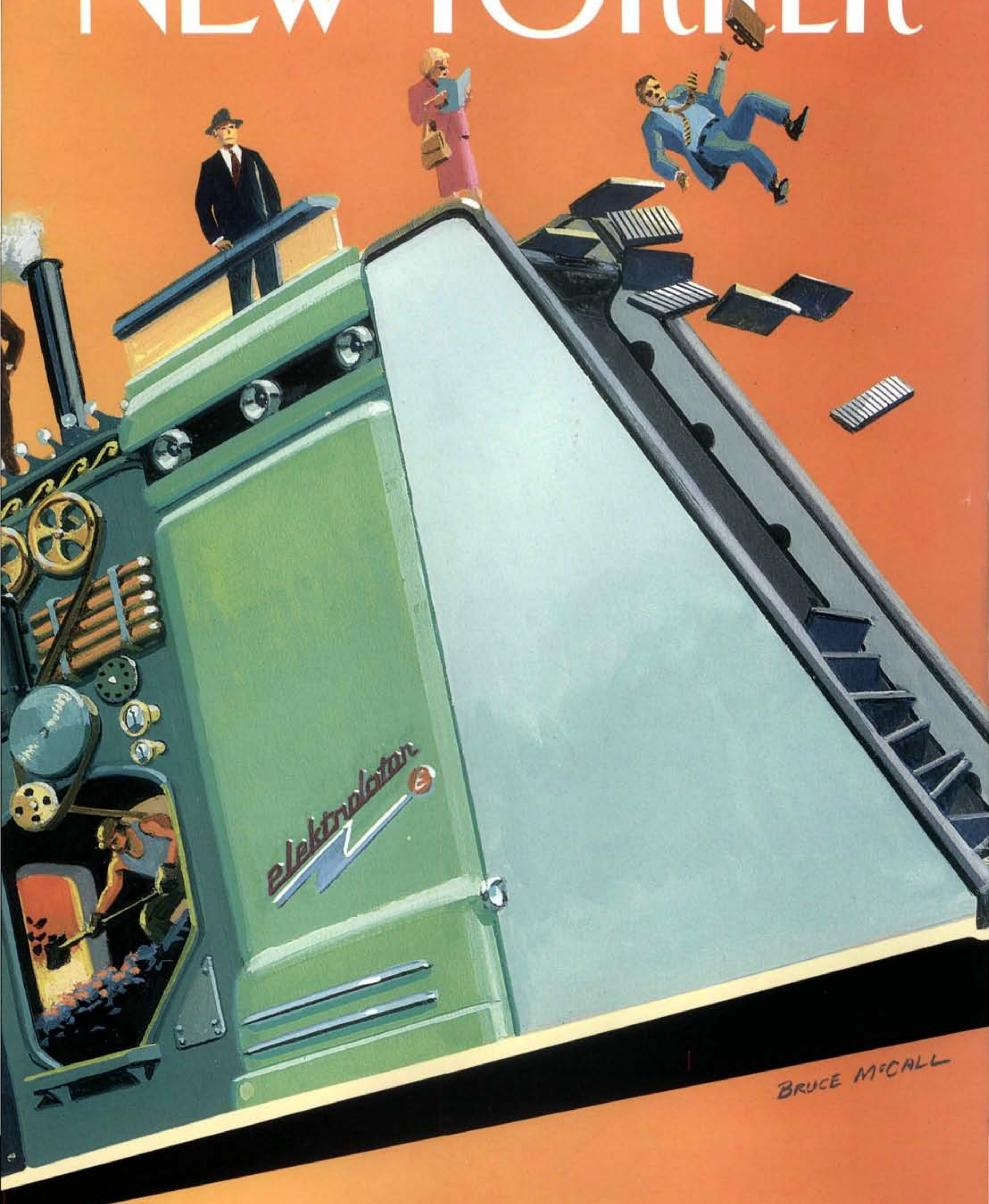
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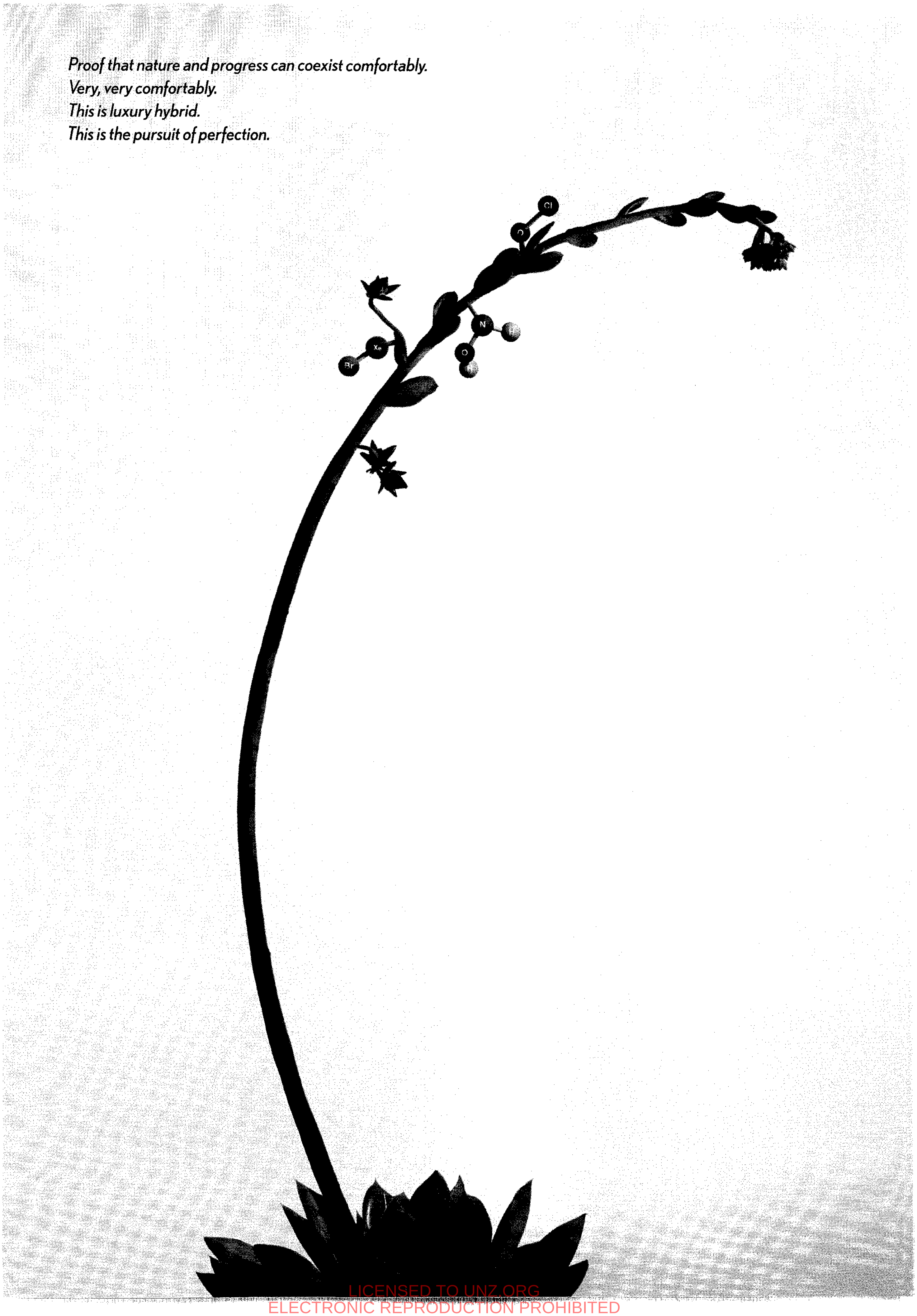
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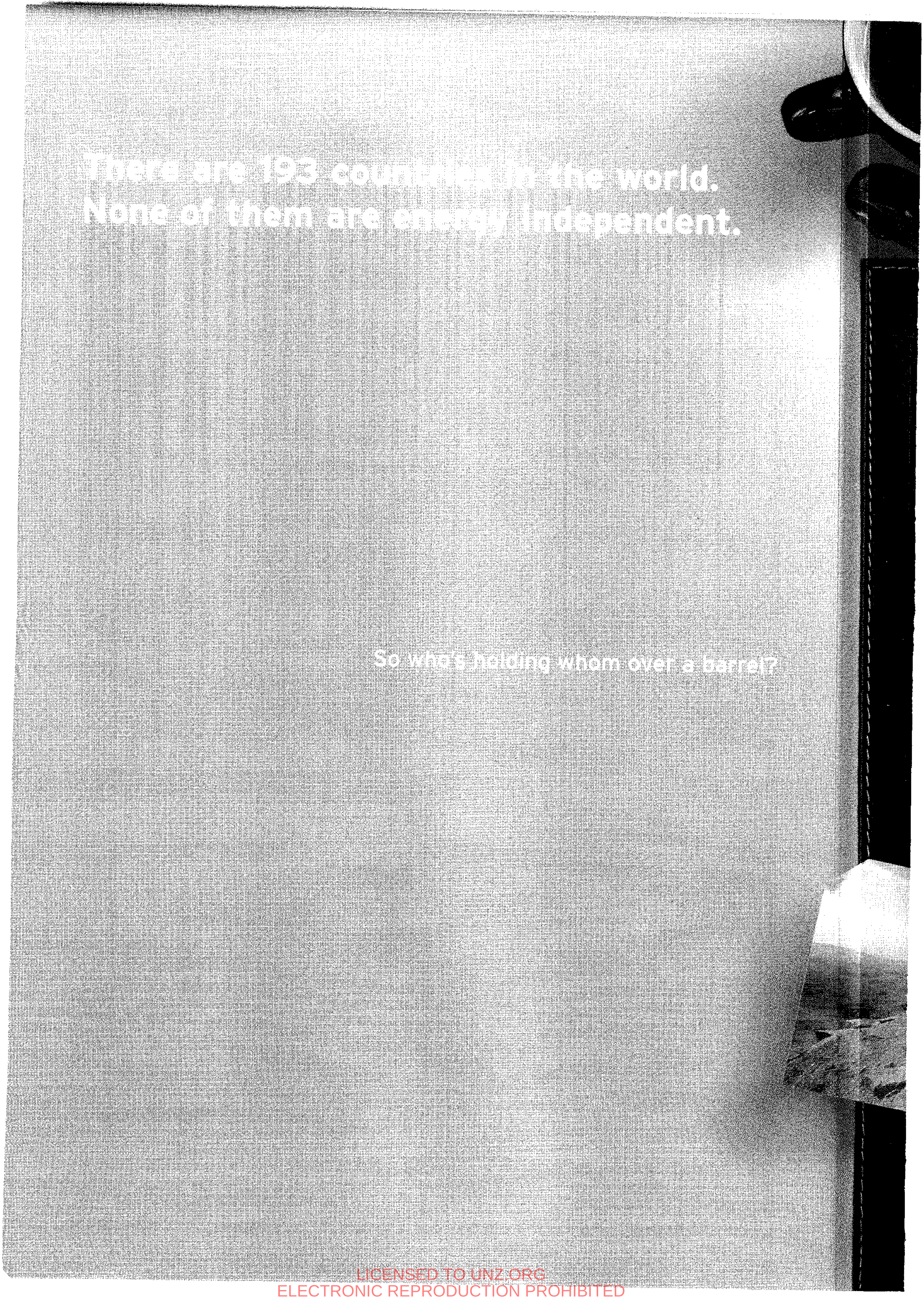
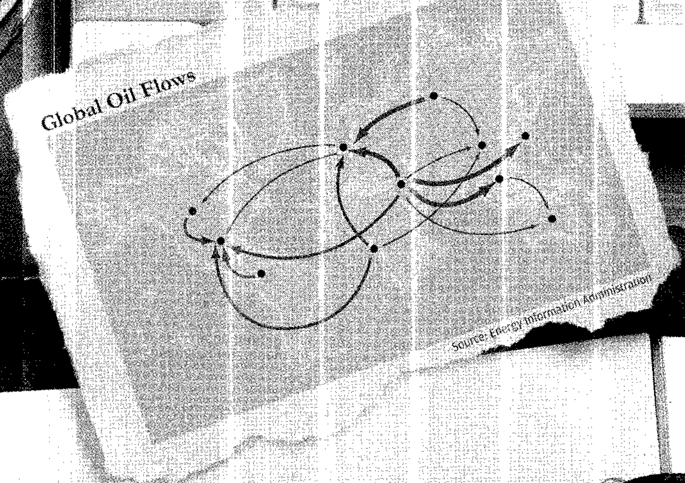

There are 193 countries in the world.
None of them are energy independent.
So who's holding whom over a barrel?



Global Oil Flows

Source: Energy Information Administration

The fact is, the vast majority of countries rely on the few energy-producing nations that won the geological lottery, blessing them with abundant hydrocarbons. And yet, even regions with plenty of raw resources import some form of energy. Saudi Arabia, for example, the world's largest oil exporter, imports refined petroleum products like gasoline.

So if energy independence is an unrealistic goal, how does everyone get the fuel they need, especially in a world of rising demand, supply disruptions, natural disasters, and unstable regimes?

True global energy security will be a result of cooperation and engagement, not isolationism. When investment and expertise are allowed to flow freely across borders, the engine of innovation is ignited, prosperity is fueled and the energy available to everyone increases. At the same time, balancing the needs of producers and consumers is as crucial as increasing supply and curbing demand. Only then will the world enjoy energy peace-of-mind.

Succeeding in securing energy for everyone doesn't have to come at the expense of anyone. Once we all start to think differently about energy, then we can truly make this promise a reality.

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OBJECTIVES

EFFICIENCIES

ENERGY IMPORTS BY OIL EXPORTING COUNTRIES

	GASOLINE	ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	COAL
Saudi Arabia	🚗			
Russia		⚡	🔥	●
Norway	🚗	⚡		●
UAE	🚗		🔥	
Nigeria	🚗			

Source: Energy Information Administration

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

- DIVERSIFY ENERGY SUPPLIES
  - FIND MORE TRADITIONAL FUELS
  - DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES AND RENEWABLES
- FOSTER OPEN MARKETS & TRANSPARENCY
- ENCOURAGE CONSERVATION/ ENERGY EFFICIENCY

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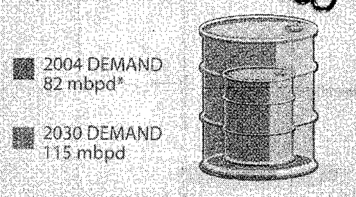
Projected Global Oil Demand



▨ 2004 DEMAND 82 mbpd*

▨ 2030 DEMAND 115 mbpd

Source: International Energy Agency
*million barrels per day

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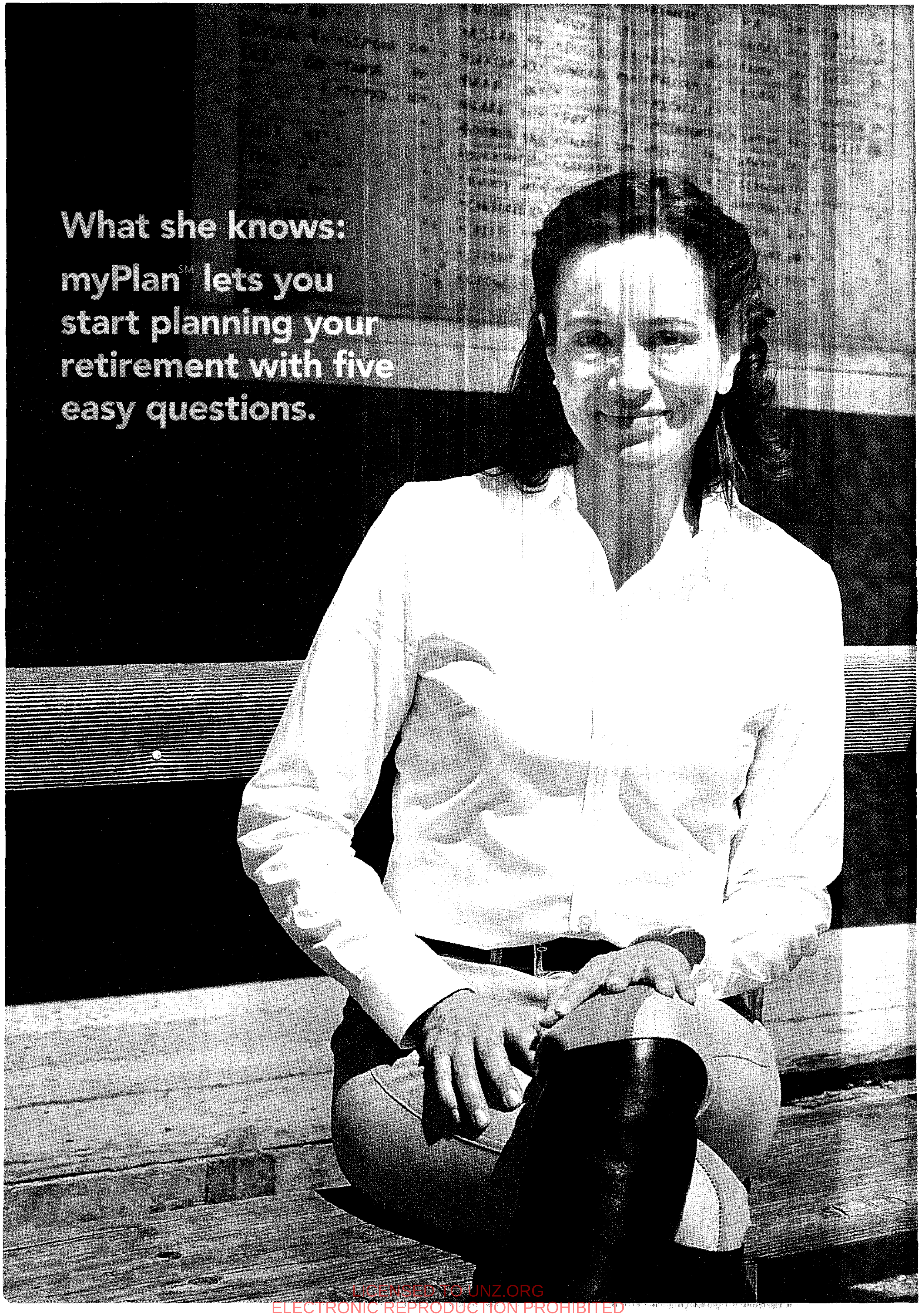
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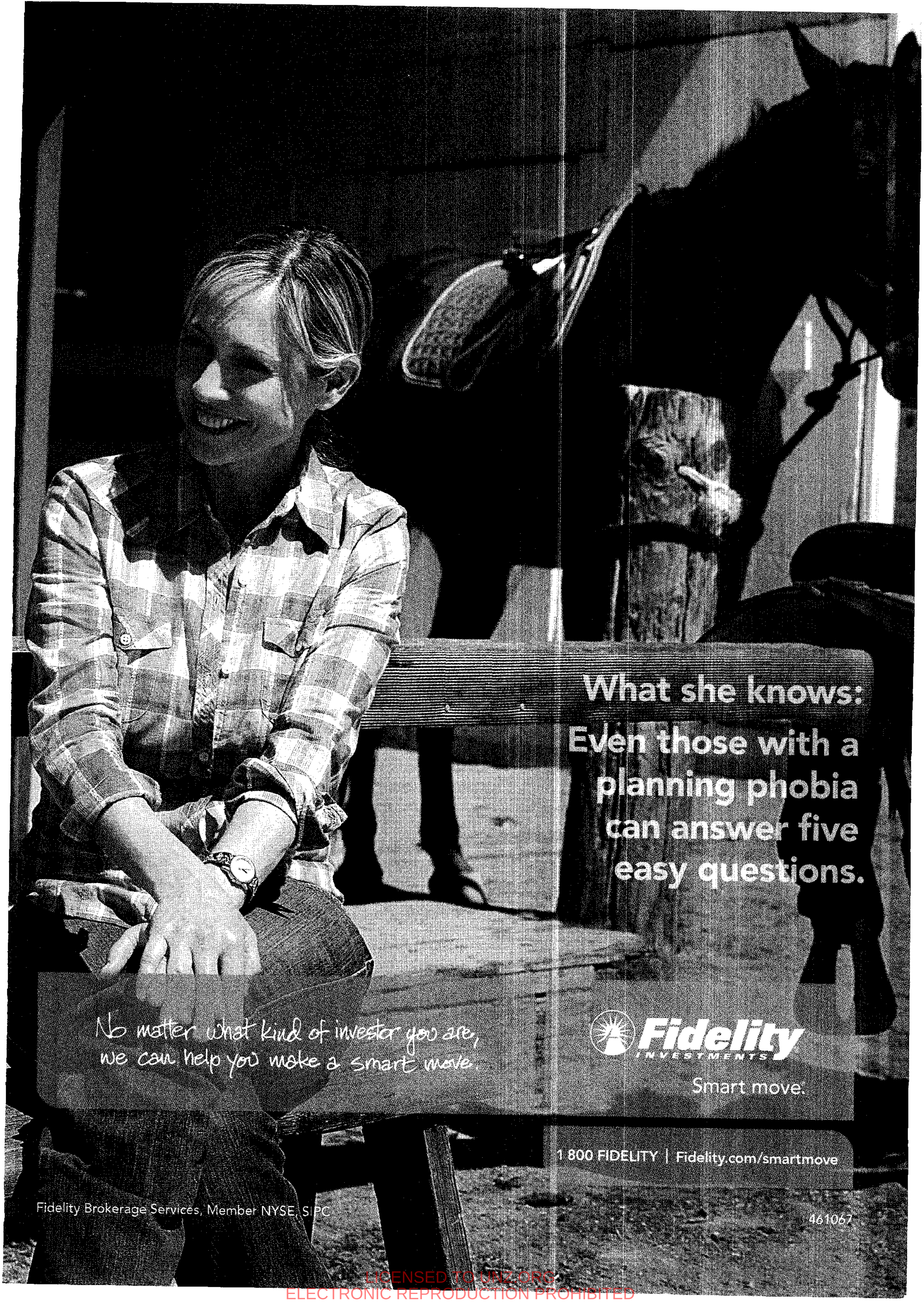

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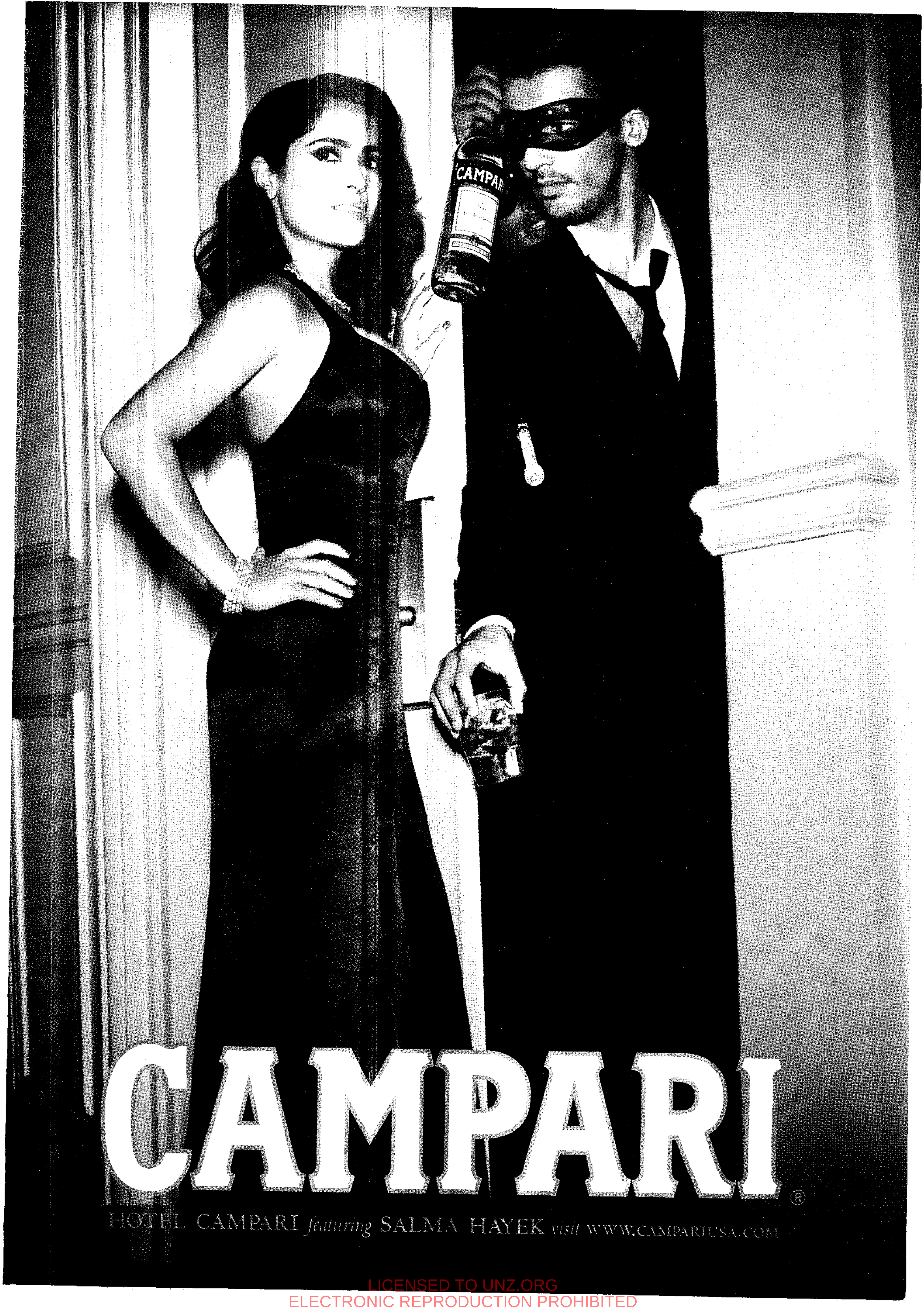
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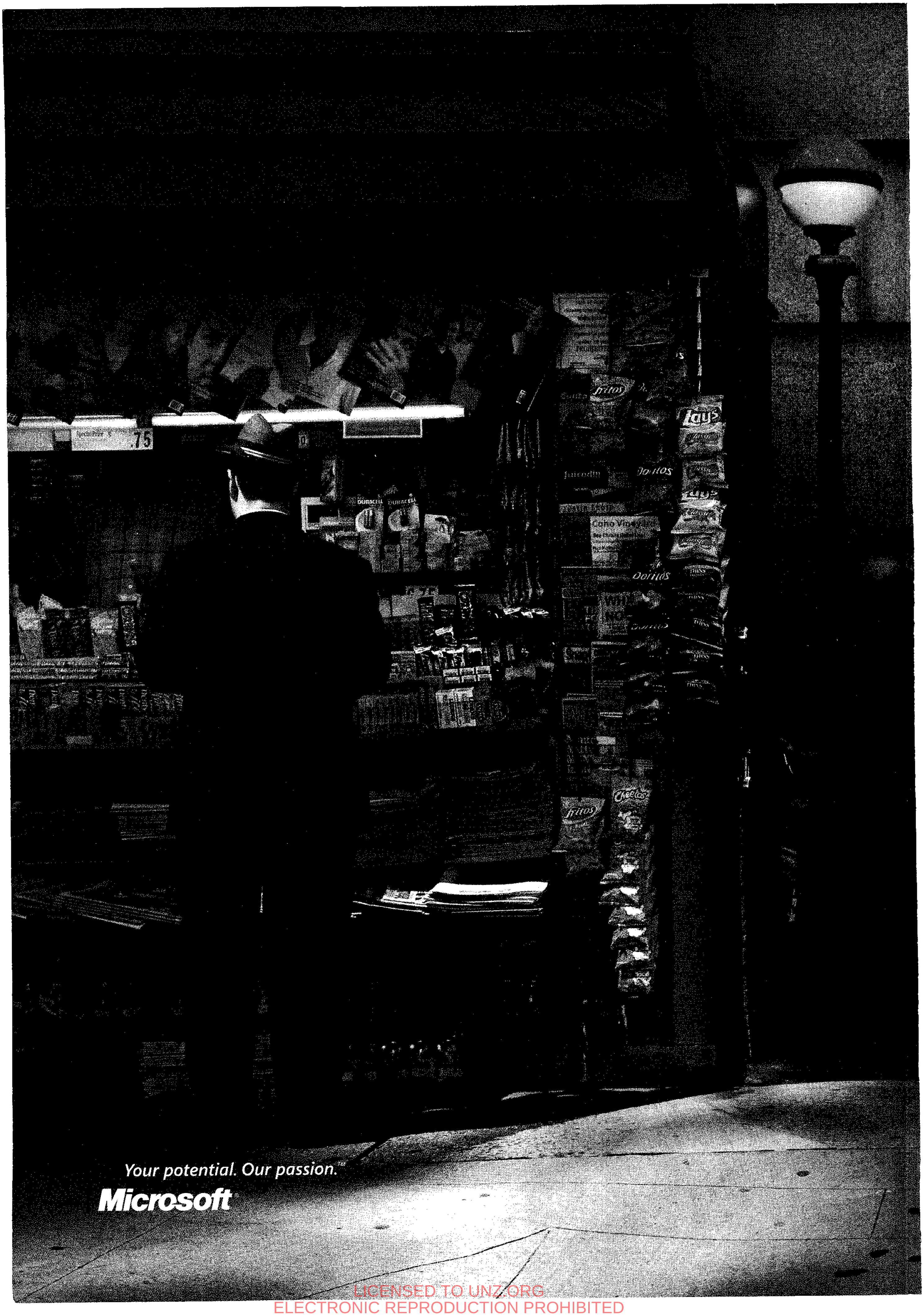
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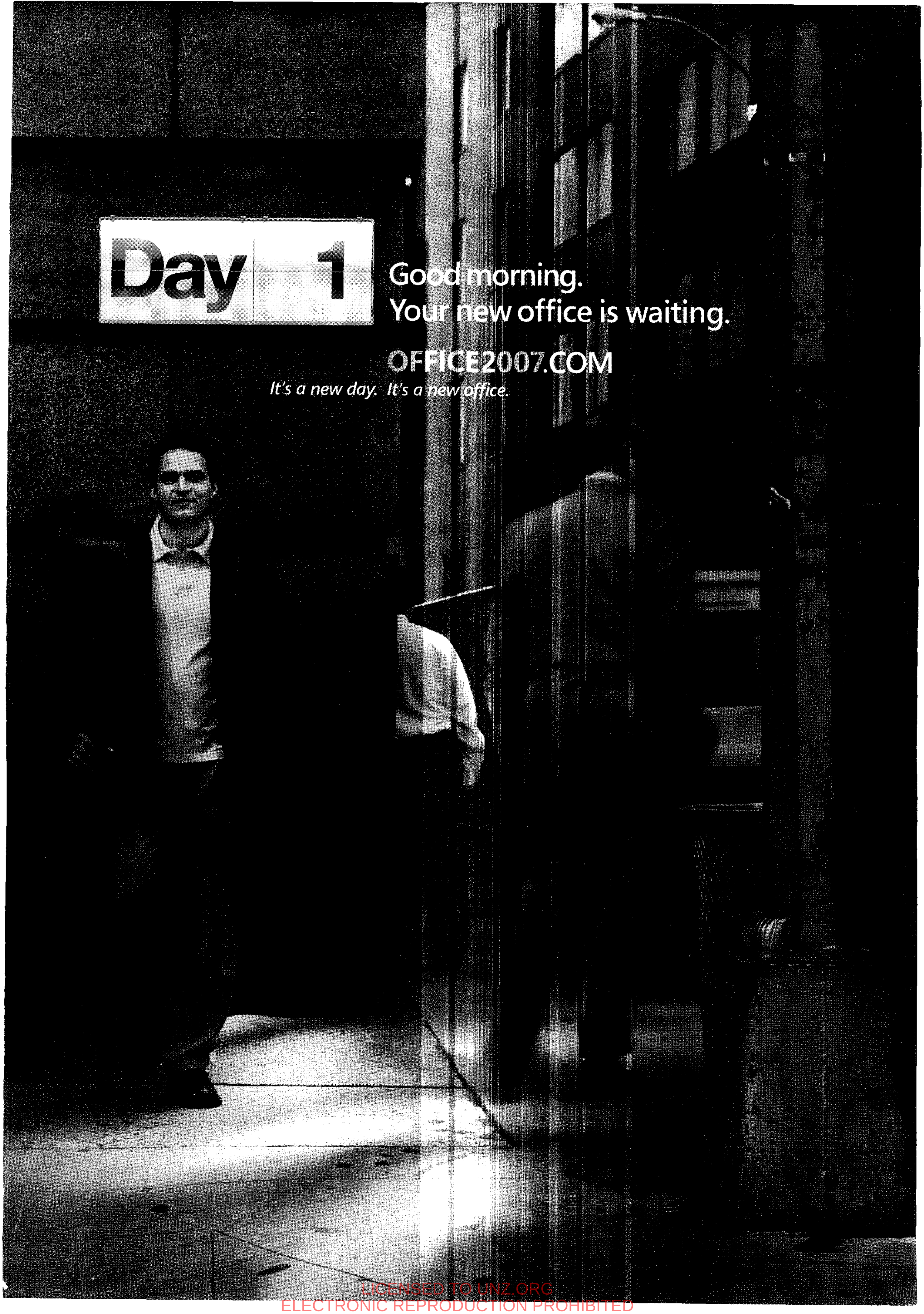
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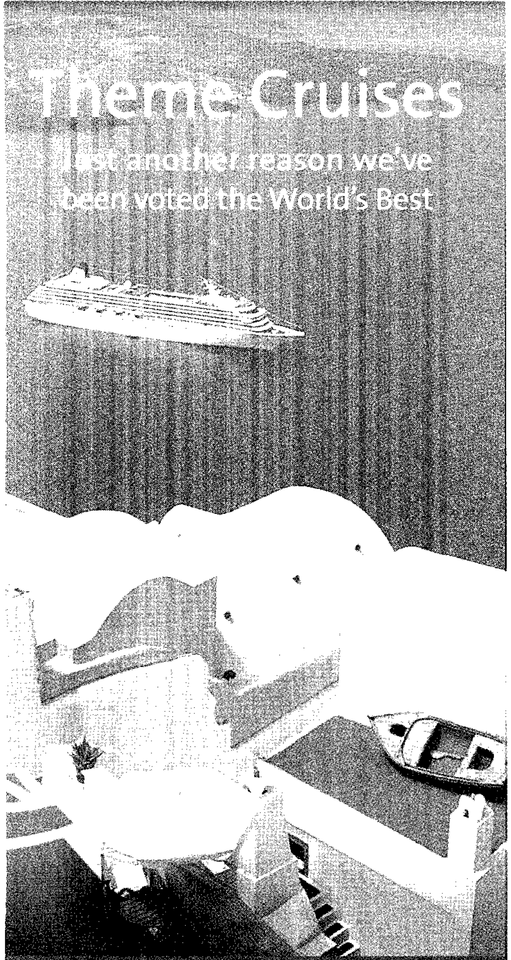

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THE MAIL

MAKING THE WORLD BANK

John Cassidy, in his piece on Paul Wolfowitz and his tenure at the World Bank, accurately describes the financial body as a presidential institution ("The Next Crusade," April 9th). Arguably, no other multilateral organization provides its chief executive with as much autonomy over operational decisions or as much discretion over personnel matters. Even so, it is surprising that it took such a long time for the apparent irregularities associated with the promotion and secondment of the president's partner to come to light. Less surprising is the lack of official response of the World Bank's member countries to the strategic gap left by James Wolfensohn, the most passionate advocate of the global poor since Robert S. McNamara. Only the president can articulate new policy priorities, forge new partnerships, and wield the World Bank's formidable array of lending and non-lending instruments to address the complex problems faced by poor countries in a world of turmoil and transition. Given the unprecedented challenges faced by humanity in the new millennium (vast poverty, rising inequalities, trade protectionism, failed states, climate change, etc.), the sins of commission of Paul Wolfowitz at the beginning of his presidency are far less serious than his seemingly chronic sins of omission.

Robert Picciotto
Former Director General, Evaluation
World Bank
London, England

Cassidy contrasts the tenure of Wolfowitz with that of McNamara, who also came from the Department of Defense to head the World Bank, in the spring of 1968. But Cassidy attributes too much to McNamara. The bank was hardly "a fairly sleepy institution," as one of Cassidy's sources says, and many of McNamara's "ideas about new areas it should expand into"—such as education, health care, and poverty—were already in place. An Education Division, within what was then the Department of Technical Operations of the bank, was established as early as 1963. I happened to go to Afghanistan in the fall of 1962 on a bank mission to study and recommend a loan for the construction and equipment of seven vocational schools at the secondary level. A $3.5-million loan for this purpose was approved in November of 1964, about four years before the beginning of McNamara's thirteen-year tenure. To be sure, McNamara did much to increase the flow of lending, as Cassidy suggests. But the contrast with Wolfowitz may not be quite so sharp.

Guy Benveniste
Professor Emeritus, Graduate School of Education
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, Calif.

KIRSTEIN AND FRY

Claudia Roth Pierpont, in her essay about the co-founder of the New York City Ballet, Lincoln Kirstein, notes that he started the literary magazine *Hound & Horn* while he was a student at Harvard University (Books, April 16th). Kirstein's partner in this successful literary venture was a New Yorker named Varian Fry. Fry went on to volunteer, in 1940, for a secret mission to Marseilles, where, in one of the most successful private rescue operations of the Second World War, he helped save the lives of more than fifteen hundred artists, writers, philosophers, scientists, musicians, and others, including Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, André Breton, André Masson, Franz Werfel, and Hannah Arendt. Varian Fry was not only a hero but also, through the works created by those he saved, a shaper of American culture.

Sheila Isenberg
Woodstock, N.Y.

•

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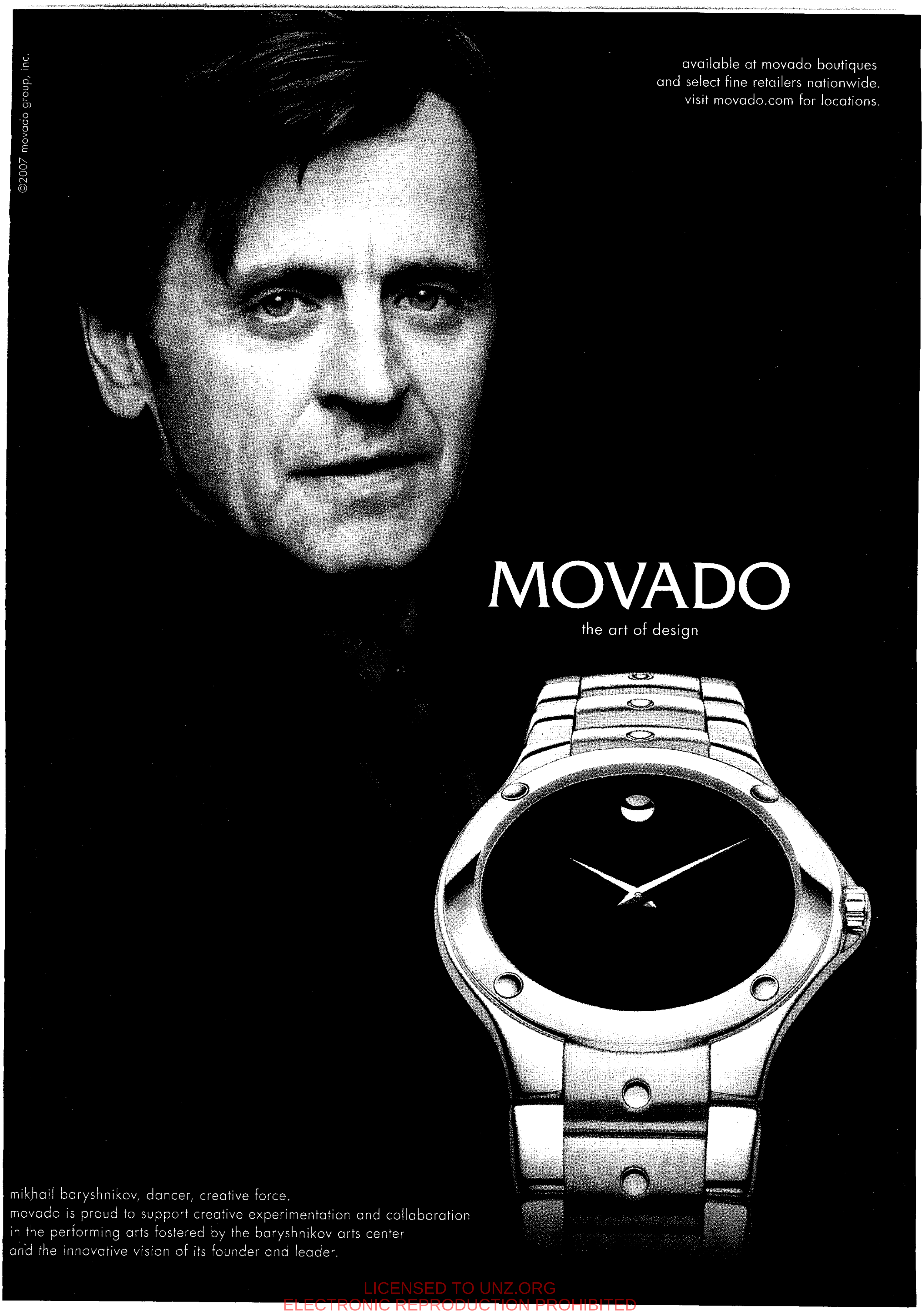
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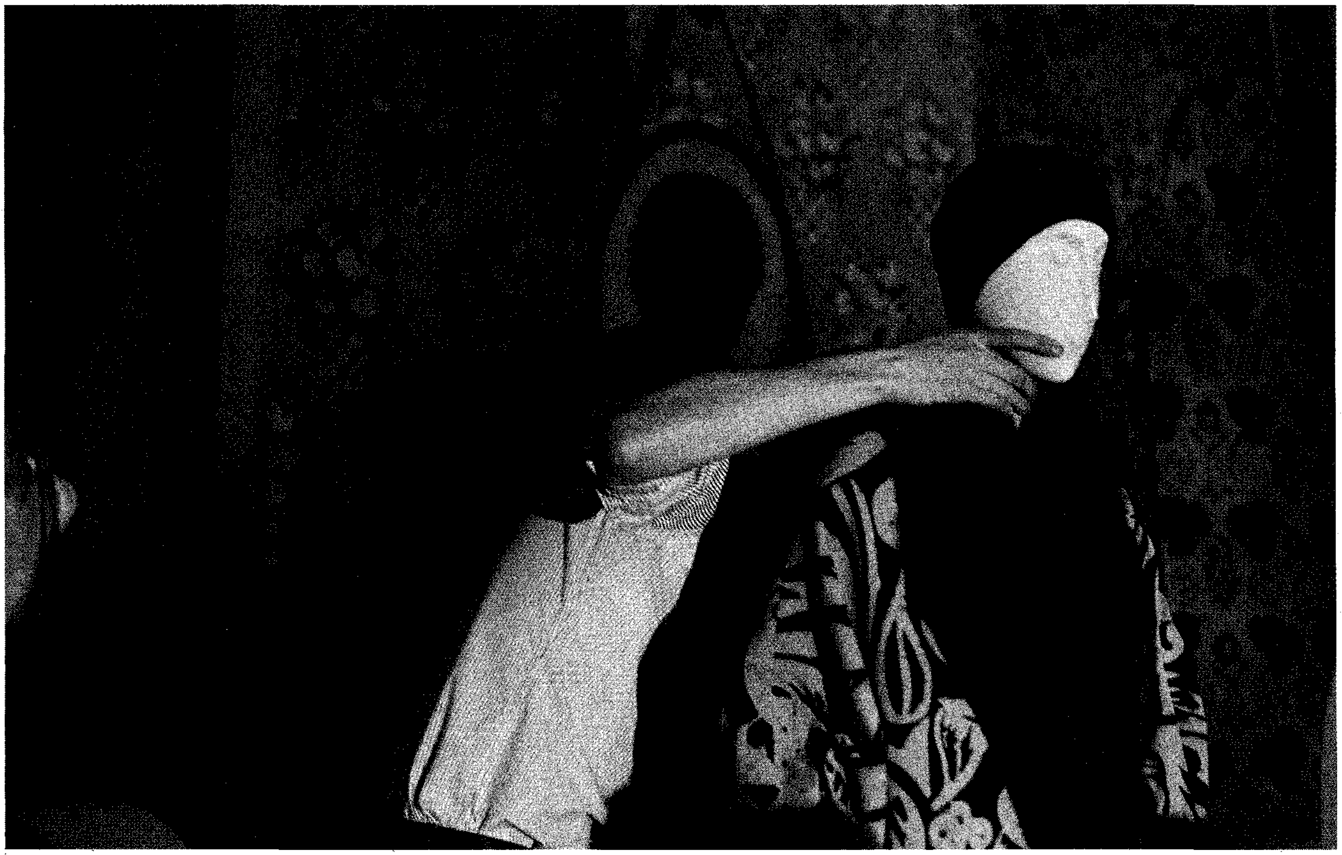


The fashion of Paul Poiret, now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photograph by Lisa Kereszi.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
13	14	15	9	10	11	12

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
ROAD TRIP

The singer-songwriter Patty Griffin wrote the music and lyrics for the Atlantic Theatre Company's "10 Million Miles," which stars Mare Winningham, Irene Molloy, Skipp Sudduth, and Matthew Morrison. Keith Bunin wrote the book, and Michael Mayer ("Spring Awakening") directs. (See page 18.)

NIGHT LIFE
FAMILY MATTERS

The Magic Numbers, an English quartet made up of two sets of siblings, plays sunny guitar pop full of vocal harmonizing. They make music that's classic and contemporary at the same time, and they pay a visit to the Hiro Ballroom this week. (See page 22.)

ART
BIRTHDAY PARTY

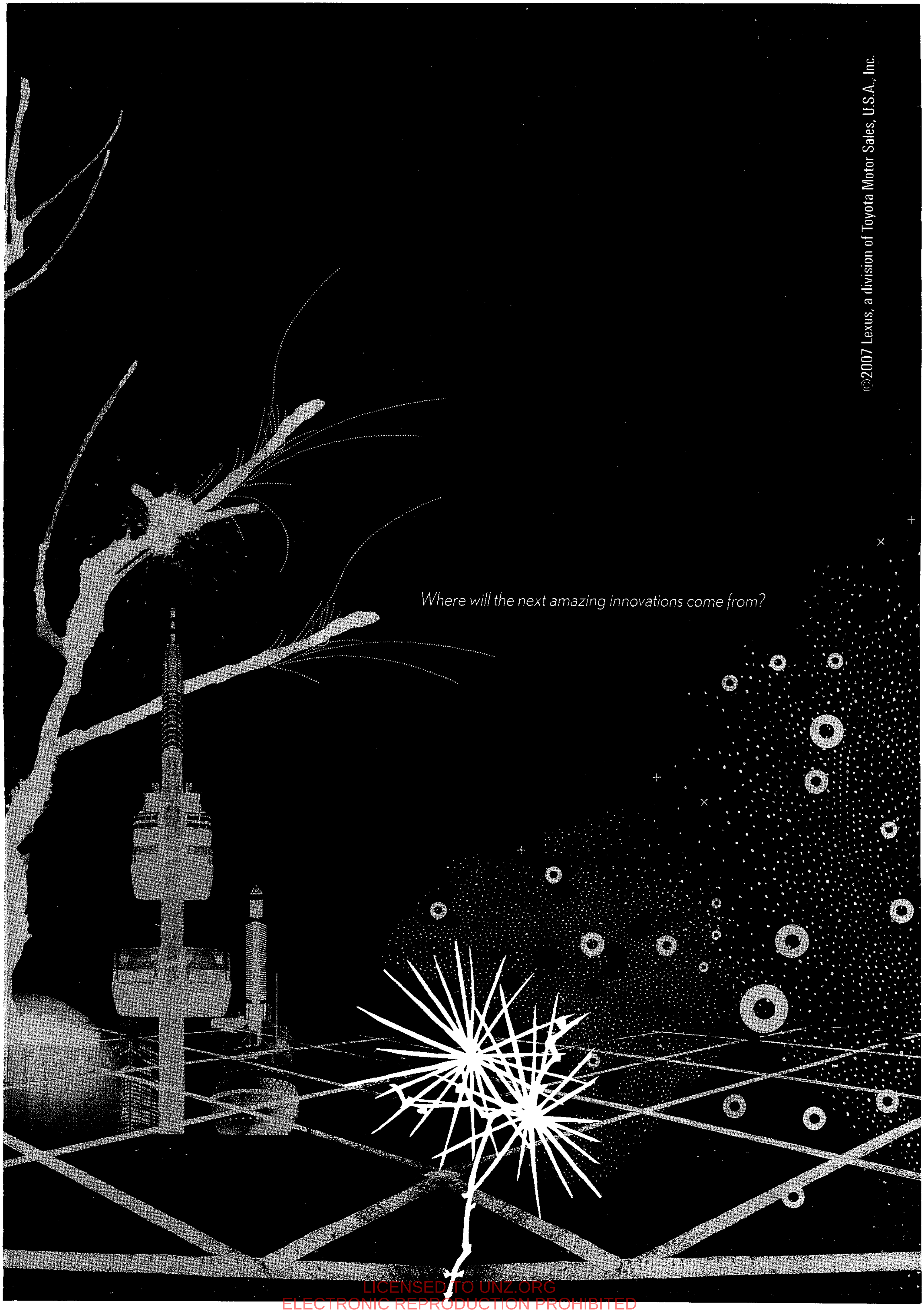
The prolific and inventive Frank Stella celebrates his birthday this week, and New York is awash with opportunities to celebrate. The roof garden at the Met has reopened for summer, with a series of his stainless-steel and carbon-fibre sculptural works; inside the museum, a second exhibit traces his career in painting and how it fed into his architectural designs. And in Chelsea, the Kasmin gallery will have a show of more recent sculpture starting May 11. (See pages 24 and 28.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
HOME AND AWAY

The soprano Deborah Voigt, adored for her Wagner and Strauss roles, is ranging into new territory in her recitals. Her upcoming Carnegie Hall concert features a Masonic cantata by Mozart, five romances by Verdi, and songs by Bernstein, Respighi, and Amy Beach. (See page 32.)

MOVIES
FAMILY PLOT

The French director Philippe Garrel, born in 1948, founded a dynasty in an uncommon fashion—he started in the middle. His harsh, intimate dramas, many of which deal with his long relationship with the pop singer Nico, have often featured his father, the actor Maurice Garrel; "Regular Lovers," from 2005, stars his son, Louis. BAM offers two weeks of work by the Garrels. (See page 38.)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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
HOLDING THE FORT

SCOTT VINCENT

The trouble in ballet today is that the great amalgam of emotion and abstraction achieved in the mid-twentieth century seems to be coming apart. Those choreographers who aim for expressiveness tend to be cornballs, while those who look modern are often cold and dry. One person still holding things together is Alexei Ratmansky, the artistic director of the Bolshoi. Last season, New York City Ballet presented his "Middle Duet," but only once. This season, the piece will be performed May 15-16, May 19, and May 25. This is an early ballet of Ratmansky's, and it has a punk coloration that he may have picked up from the dry/cold folks, notably William Forsythe. For the first minute or two, the ballerina dances with her back to us. Later, she does perilous tilts, monster moves. Still, the piece is classical: you can see the ballet steps, the order they impose. And it is intimate: something serious is happening between these two people. Strangely, the pattern of a cathedral window is projected onto the floor. The piece may be even more serious than it looks. Anyway, it's a thrill.

—*Joan Acocella*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BETROTHED
Rachel Dickstein wrote and directs this triptych, based on S. Ansky's "The Dybbuk," Chekhov's "Betrothed," and Jhumpa Lahiri's "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar." In previews. Opens May 10. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

CRAZY MARY
Sigourney Weaver stars in a new play by A. R. Gurney, about a wealthy woman and her son visiting a cousin in a mental institution, at Playwrights Horizons. Jim Simpson directs. Previews begin May 11. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

DAUGHTER OF A CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY
INTAR presents Marissa Chibas's account of the lives of her father, who worked with Fidel Castro, her uncle, who ran for the Cuban Presidency in 1951 and committed suicide on live radio, and her mother, a Miss Cuba contestant. In previews. Opens May 13. (DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

DIXIE'S TUPPERWARE PARTY
Dixie Longate, a drag performer who became Tupperware's top salesperson, tells her story, in a play directed by Alex Timbers and written by Kris Andersson and Elizabeth Meriwether. In previews. Opens May 10. (Ars Nova, 511 W. 54th St. 212-868-4444.)

GASLIGHT
Charlotte Moore directs Patrick Hamilton's Victorian psychological thriller from 1938, which was originally titled "Angel Street" before it was adapted to film twice in the early forties. In previews. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

110 IN THE SHADE
Roundabout Theatre Company's production of the musical by Harvey Schmidt, Tom Jones, and N. Richard Nash. Audra McDonald stars; Lonny Price directs. Opens May 9. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.)

PASSING STRANGE
The singer-songwriter Stew wrote the book and lyrics to this musical, about a young black bohemian's search for himself. Annie Dorsen directs; with choreography by Karole Armitage. In previews. Opens May 14. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

PRETTY CHIN UP
A LAByrinth Theatre Company developmental production of a satire by Andrea Ciannavei, about a corpulent executive and the model selling the diet pills he markets. Opens May 15. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

STAIRWAY TO PARADISE
Kristin Chenoweth stars in this Encores! production, a celebration of Broadway revues. May 10-14. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

10 MILLION MILES
Atlantic Theatre Company presents the première of a new musical featuring music and lyrics by Patty Griffin, about a young man and woman on a road trip from Florida to upstate New York. Keith Bunin wrote the book; Michael Mayer directs. Previews begin May 11. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOW PLAYING

BEAUTY ON THE VINE
The sylphlike Lauren (Olivia Wilde) is right-wing radio's new golden girl—something of a cross between Ann Coulter and Peggy Noonan—and her free-associative monologues have earned her a loyal following among teen-age girls and dirty old men. When she spots Sweet (Howard W. Overshown)—a hip, biracial music journalist—Lauren sets her sights on him, eluding the grasp of her controlling father (Victor Slezak). Soon enough she's fatally shot, perhaps by an enraged stalker. Lauren's voice is rebroadcast on the airwaves; meanwhile, Sweet encounters two women with surgically created replicas of Lauren's face. Zak Berkman's nonlinear play is freighted with logic holes and clunky symbolism, although it is ingeniously framed by Narelle Sissons's mirrored sets. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

BIOGRAPHY
A sense of comic satisfaction is what the audience takes away from the splendid revival of S. N. Behrman's 1932 hit, well cast and well directed by J. R. Sullivan. Behrman pits the audacious magazine editor Richard Kurt (the excellent Sean McNall) against the hectic, emollient charm of the portrait painter Marion Froude (the expert Carolyn McCormick), a model of generous bohemianism. The comedy revolves around the legend of Froude's full life; Kurt arrives with a check and an offer to serialize her story. A series of literate cameos—the Hollywood star, the European composer, the aspiring senator, the macho mogul, the aggrieved fiancé—stir the pot and allow Froude to display her cunning and her compassion. This well-wrought comedy manages to catch the openness of heart that makes both her courage and her vulnerability irresistible. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/7/07.) (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

THE BRIG
For the second time in half a century, Judith Malina directs the Living Theatre's production of Kenneth H. Brown's countercultural landmark, which attracted the intervention of the federal government when the troupe débuted it, in 1963. As much a mind-altering substance as anything that came out of the sixties, the sly and brutal play, based on Brown's experiences in a Japanese Marine Corps prison, uses the tedium of military drills to probe the debilitating effects of authoritarianism. There's little in the way of conflict—this is Nurse Ratched's world without a McMurphy—but Malina and her committed cast make clear the psychological costs of discipline as it edges, inexorably, into sadism. (19-21 Clinton St. 212-352-3101.)

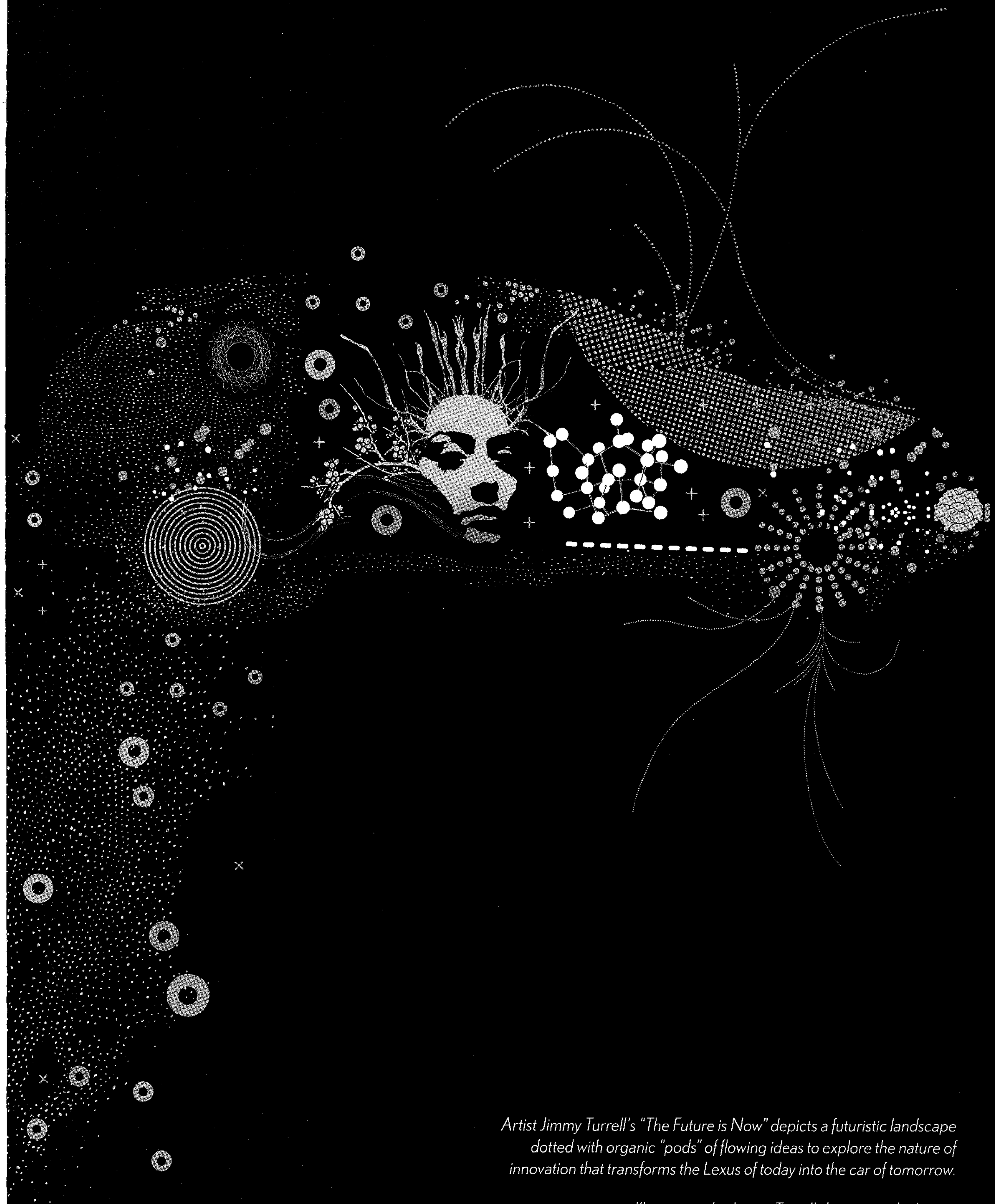
"BRITS OFF BROADWAY"
The annual festival of British theatre includes "The Receipt," by Will Adamsdale and Chris Branch, and "Memory," written by Jonathan Lichtenstein and directed by the Tony nominee Terry Hands. Benjamin Davis's "Silverland" opens May 15. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

CHURCH
The plays of Young Jean Lee are as personal and probing as they are utterly demented. Her latest, an hour-long assault on the topic of spirituality, is composed of sermons, admonishments, exuberant songs and dances, and parables that spin off into phantasmagoric nonsense. Lee's project isn't to send up organized religion—though one gets the sense that she could eviscerate it if she chose—but to knead away at Christianity until her presumably godless downtown audience becomes vulnerable to it. Implicating everyone, including herself, Lee puts the menace back into concepts as exotic to the P.S. 122 crowd as sin, Satan, and salvation; for the unwaveringly secular, she offers the slighter pleasure of brazen theatrical inventiveness. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave. 212-352-3101. Through May 13.)

CORAM BOY
Helen Edmundson adapts Jamila Gavin's novel, about two orphans in eighteenth-century England. Melly Still directs the National Theatre production. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

CYMBELINE
The British company Cheek by Jowl brings its production of the rarely staged Shakespeare play. Declan Donnellan directs. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100. Through May 12.)

DEUCE
Angela Lansbury and Marian Seldes star in Terrence McNally's new play, in which champion



To the pursuit of perfection.

Artist Jimmy Turrell's "The Future is Now" depicts a futuristic landscape dotted with organic "pods" of flowing ideas to explore the nature of innovation that transforms the Lexus of today into the car of tomorrow.

Illustrations by Jimmy Turrell; Inspiration by Lexus.

Jimmy Turrell

tennis doubles partners reunite. Michael Blakemore directs. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

FROST/NIXON
The Donmar Warehouse production of Peter Morgan's drama, based on the combative interviews between former President Richard Nixon (Frank Langella, in a magnificent performance) and the British talk-show pundit David Frost (Michael Sheen), has not travelled smoothly to Broadway. The monumentality of the space—with thirty-six TV screens on the upstage wall, on which the "televised" debates can be seen—swallows up the actors, who are forced to do a lot of spinning and pacing and crossing to provide a bogus dynamism. The dialogue is still trenchant, the main performances are still vivacious and crowd-pleasing, but, in Michael Grandage's transfer, "Frost/Nixon" has become bombastic. (4/30/07) (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

GOD'S EAR
New Georges presents the première of a play by Jenny Schwartz, about a couple mourning the loss of their young son. Directed by Anne Kauffman. (East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-868-4444.)

I LAND
Ma-Yi Theatre Company presents Keo Woolford's show about Hawaiian identity and hula dancing, with choreography by Rokafella and Robert Cazimero. (Culture Project, 55 Mercer St. 212-352-3101. Through May 13.)

LEGALLY BLONDE THE MUSICAL
Among life's more meaningless victories, count this: the Reese Witherspoon film from 2001, about Elle Woods, a Delta Nu sister who follows her ex-boyfriend all the way to Harvard Law School, has been serviceably staged for Broadway by the choreographer Jerry Mitchell, in his directing début. From its opening number, "Omigod You Guys," Mitchell infuses the show with breakneck buoyancy; it's just diverting enough that you forget this is something Elle herself would shun—knockoff merchandise. In the lead role, Laura Bell Bundy has the pep but not the spark of her big-screen predecessor; she's backed up, however, by a reliable supporting cast—most notably Orfeh, as a manicurist with a penchant for Celtic music and the U.P.S. delivery guy. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

LOVEMUSIK
Michael Cerveris and Donna Murphy star in this musical, which chronicles the romance between Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya. With songs by Weill and a book by Alfred Uhry. Directed by Harold Prince. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

NEW VICTORY DANISH CHILDREN'S THEATRE FESTIVAL
The New Victory Theatre offers five U.S. premières, including "Hans Christian, You Must Be an Angel" and "Elephant and Crocodile." (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Through May 13.)

RADIO GOLF
The final installment of August Wilson's ten-play cycle, set in Pittsburgh's Hill District, is about an African-American politician's rise to prominence in 1997. Harry Lennix and Tonya Pinkins star; Kenny Leon directs. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

SMOKE AND MIRRORS
Joseph Goodrich's dystopian office fantasy captures the glacial, disjointed rhythm of workplace conversations in an employee smoking lounge: it's a kind of nine-to-five prison yard, in which we see the grotesque and the ordinary conjoined. Every character is entitled to an ashtray and a coffee mug, and beyond that there's little to keep them occupied (no one seems to do any actual work). An anonymous antiwar e-mail circulates, and two security guards try to force Anita (Susan Hyon)—an attractive Asian-American woman—into betraying its authorship. And there's something else afoot when two guys from "the tower" enter with blood on their lab coats, much to the distress of a silent co-worker. The director, Nick Faust, makes good use of the Flea's subterranean space to set off the play's quietly ominous dialogue, a feast of incremental absurdities. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

Also Playing

AMERICAN FIESTA: Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303. **BLACKBIRD:** City Center, Stage I, at 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. **THE COAST OF UTOPIA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. Through May 13. **COMPANY:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **GREY GARDENS:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **INHERIT THE WIND:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **IN THE HEIGHTS:** 37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100. **THE J.A.P. SHOW, JEWISH AMERICAN PRINCESSES OF COMEDY:** Actor's Temple Theatre, 339 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **JOURNEY'S END:** Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **SPALDING GRAY: STORIES LEFT TO TELL:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 212-307-7171. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **TALK RADIO:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

APOLLO THEATRE
253 W. 125th St. (212-531-5300)—May 14-15: It's been almost fifty years since **Mavis Staples** first played the Apollo, as the lead voice in the family band called the Staple Singers, led by her father, Pops. The Staples were a potent blend of gospel, blues, soul, and social commentary, scoring hits with "I'll Take You There" and "Respect Yourself," among others. Decades on, Mavis has a new record, "We'll Never Turn Back," produced by Ry Cooder, which concentrates on songs of the civil-rights movement. She'll be joined for these concerts by the Freedom Singers, Jim Keltner on drums, and Cooder on guitar.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—May 10: **Andy Statman,** a clarinet and mandolin virtuoso, is an American visionary. Although he has immersed himself in Eastern European klezmer music, he's more than willing to incorporate jazz, country, and other domestic sounds into the Old World mix. May 12: The little musical hot spot celebrates its fifth birthday, with performances by a few of its favorite bands, including **Las Rubias del Norte** and **Chicha Libre.**

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—May 10: In the sixties, **Maria Muldaur** was singing in the Village with the Jim Kweskin Jug Band. Last year, she released "Heart of Mine," an album of love songs by her fellow-folkie Bob Dylan. "Naughty, Bawdy & Blue," her latest release, completes a trilogy of records covering the songs of female blues pioneers. Her voice has roughened just enough to be the perfect instrument for these tunes. And she's not likely to skip "Midnight at the Oasis." May 15: As one of the very first performers to take the stage at Woodstock in 1969, **Melanie** was the face of flower power, with her long, straight hair, flowy dresses, and gentle communal sentiments. Think of her as Joanna Newsom's hippie godmother.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—May 12: **Los Amigos Invisibles,** a groovy dance band with roots in Venezuela. May 14: The Swedish rockers **Mando Diao** light up the stage.

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—May 10-11: The shambolic sounds of Britain's **Kooks.**

TABLES FOR TWO
LUNETTA

116 Smith St. (718-488-6269)—Smith Street has been celebrated as Brooklyn's restaurant row for almost a decade, but this mostly amounts to a profusion of bistros that aim no higher than acceptable steak frites during the week and eggs Benedict on the weekend. There are a couple of award-winning exceptions to the rule (The Grocery and Saul), but other attempts to increase the ambition—and price point—of Smith Street meals have tended to founder. Adam Shepard learned this lesson the hard way: despite encouraging reviews, his Japanese-inspired restaurant, Taku, remained stubbornly empty.

In reconfiguring the place into a low-key but stylish Italian restaurant, Shepard caters to the local tendency to prefer catching a bite. Diners can mix and match the small- or medium-sized plates at will—sitting at the bar with a glass of wine and some cheese or bruschetta (the grilled tomato is the best; all are fiercely garlicky), or opting for more traditionally substantial combinations (panzanella, say, followed by steak grilled with mushrooms). At the fingerfood end of things, a dish of fried artichokes is superb: fried more or less to the consistency of potato chips and drizzled with lemon. Of the main courses, a wild bass over grilled leeks is unchallenging but prepared with real care, while the chicken provides unexpected excitement. Its appearance—just a heap of chicken on a plate—leaves you unprepared for the sweet-and-sour intensity of its agrodolce sauce and the detail of its pignoli-and-raisin garnish.

Occasionally, the limitations of Shepard's formula are evident. The menu leans heavily toward pasta, but the pastas themselves—fettuccine, linguini, orecchiette—aren't as impressively flavorful as those at the more old-school Italian haunts in neighboring Carroll Gardens. An emphasis on organic ingredients is praiseworthy, but the menu's enthusiasm for the "rare breed" pork of Flying Pigs Farm seems overblown. Served with stewed lentils and cabbage, it is hearty, but insufficiently transfigured from plain old pork and beans. Nonetheless, Lunetta seems to have successfully found its audience. Early on, the dining room hums with activity, and, later in the evening, people who look like regulars, or like people who might become regulars, sit on stools near the open kitchen, bantering about their wine choices with the staff. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays for dinner and weekends for brunch and dinner. Entrées $11-$17.)

—*Leo Carey*

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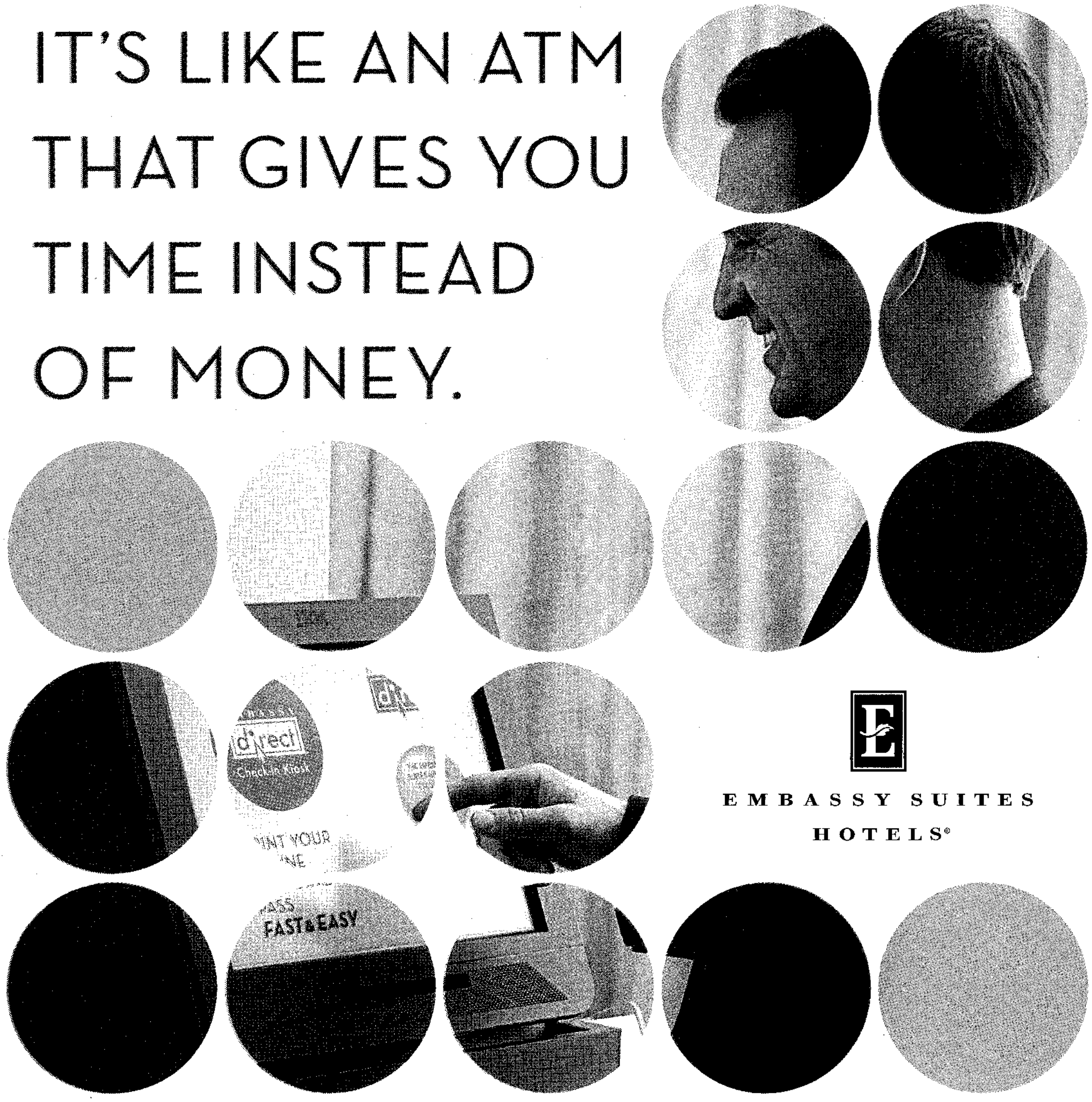

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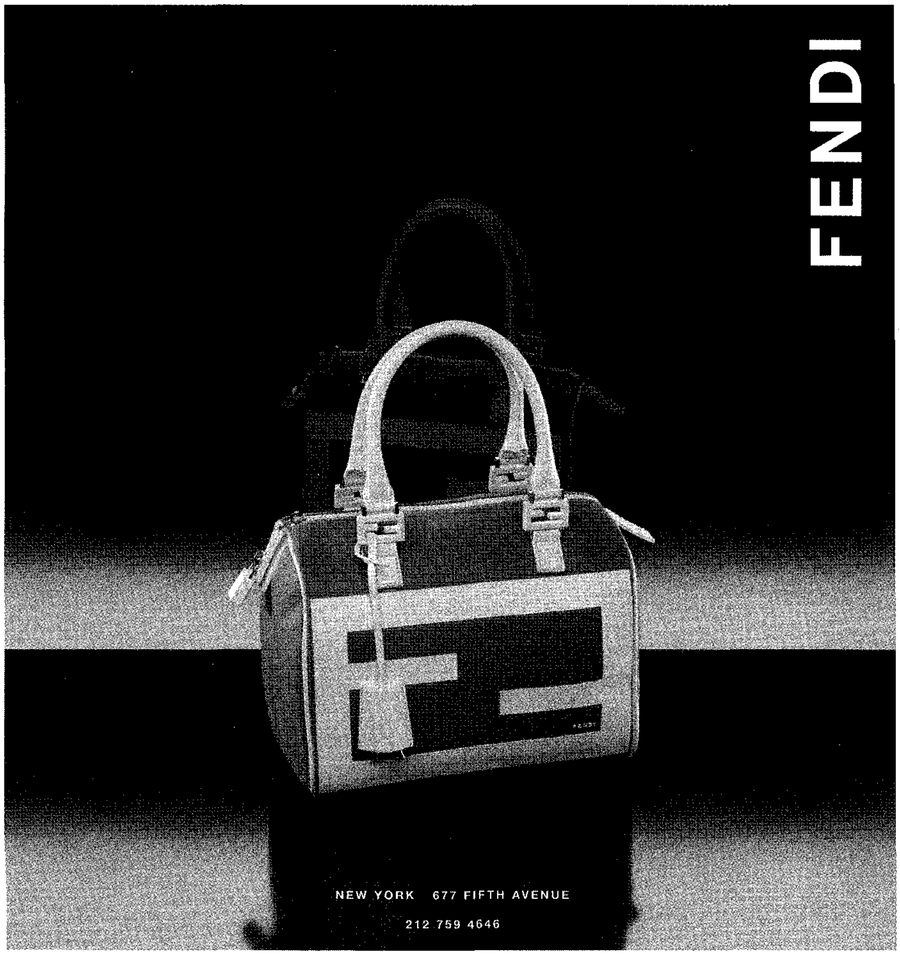

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With the up-and-coming freewheeling rockers **Illinois,** who actually hail from Pennsylvania. May 12: The **Avett Brothers** are two siblings from North Carolina, the guitarist Seth and the banjo player Scott, and a bassist, Bob Crawford. The trio sings, shouts, and plays with abandon, injecting new life into timeless roots music.

HAMMERSTEIN BALLROOM

Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. (212-307-7171)—May 15: Following in the storied footsteps of British bands like the Stone Roses and Oasis, last year the **Arctic Monkeys** came barrelling out of Sheffield with a brash, bracing sound that immediately won them acclaim in their homeland. Pairing the youthful drive of vintage punk rock with a mouthy swagger, the band is keen to bring its success Stateside as it tours behind its new album, "Favourite Worst Nightmare."

HIGHLINE BALLROOM

431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—May 8-9: **Amy Winehouse,** a fierce English performer whose voice combines the smoky depths of a jazz chanteuse with the heated passion of a soul singer. Winehouse's songs harken back to the classic girl-group sounds of the sixties, and she profits mightily from following the dictum to write what you know. Her social life is a tabloid writer's dream, and a recent hit song, "Rehab," is about not changing her wayward ways. Fresh from receiving a Brit Award for Best Female Solo Artist, she'll be performing songs from her latest release, "Back to Black." May 15: The Baltimore-based hip-hop duo **Spank Rock** takes backpack rap into the red-light district.

HIGH LINE FESTIVAL

David Bowie curates the first annual festival to benefit efforts to turn the defunct elevated railway on Manhattan's West Side into a park. He's brought in a number of acclaimed international acts, including the Montreal-based indie-rock sensation **Arcade Fire** (at Radio City Music Hall, on May 9) and the French electronica duo **Air** (at Madison Square Garden, on May 10). (For more information, visit www.highlinefestival.com. Through May 19.)

HIRO BALLROOM

The Maritime Hotel, 371 W. 16th St. (866-468-7619)—May 9: The **Magic Numbers'** eponymous début album, from 2005, was an invigorating blast of catchy rock and roll. It had more melodic, rhythmic, and lyrical hooks than may be legal. The new album, "Those the Brokes," is a little bit more mellow, but it is just as finely crafted; Romeo Stodart, the leader of the quartet (two brothers and two sisters), is on a major songwriting tear.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—May 11: The **Asylum Street Spankers,** a no-holds-barred collective of acoustic-blues-loving musicians out of Austin, Texas. May 12: The New Zealand songwriter **Tim Finn.**

MERCURY LOUNGE

217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—May 11: Don't be fooled by the unassuming zoological moniker—the **Giraffes** are a Brooklyn-based group who play unhesitatingly libidinous rock. Often eager to shock and offend (the sole headline on the "news" page of their Web site proclaims, in red capital letters, "There is no God!"), the band explores rude hilarity in a variety of permutations.

ROCKWOOD MUSIC HALL

196 Allen St. (212-477-4155)—May 10: The nimble singer-guitarist **Devon Sproule** chronicles her ongoing love affairs with humanity, nature, and the state of Virginia. She performs with a sweet, round diction that shines through even her most ornate imagery and rambunctious melodies.

WEBSTER HALL

125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—May 10: Japan's **Cornelius** (born Keigo Oyamada) takes his stage name from a kindly chimpanzee in "Planet of the Apes." He's an adept self-taught musician who makes eclectic pop that crosses a wide num-

ber of genres. May 14: **LCD Soundsystem,** the work of the proud music geek James Murphy, traffics in surprisingly tender, hip-shaking rock.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—The effervescent singer **Karrin Allyson** stops by May 9-12. Her album "Footprints," from last year, sets lyrics to classic jazz instrumentals.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—Through May 26: If **John Pizzarelli** and **Jessica Molaskey,** who are married, weren't so musically adept—she's a temperate singer, he's a swinging vocalist and accomplished guitarist—the couple would tip the cuteness scale into the danger zone. In performance they are as listenable as they are likeable, which is a testament to their skills.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—May 8-13: **Grand Reunion.** All the members of this band—the pianist **Marcus Roberts,** the saxophonist **Todd Williams,** the drummer **Herlin Riley,** and the bassist **Reginald Veal**—are alumni of the early ensembles that brought the trumpeter Wynton Marsalis fame and fortune. And who knows whether or not Marsalis will show up; this club is a part of Jazz at Lincoln Center, the house he built, after all.

"HIGHLIGHTS IN JAZZ"
May 10: Four decades after she and her then-husband Louis Prima ruled the Vegas clubs, **Keely Smith** is experiencing a new heyday. Her hipster status is as solid as her quick wit, but her talent as a mainstream vocalist remains her key selling point. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 212-220-1460.)

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—May 10-13: The members of the **Four Generations of Miles** band—**Mike Stern, George Coleman, Buster Williams,** and **Jimmy Cobb**—may never have actually played together in Davis's groups, but they all share modal-bop agility and a lingering love for the Master's music. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

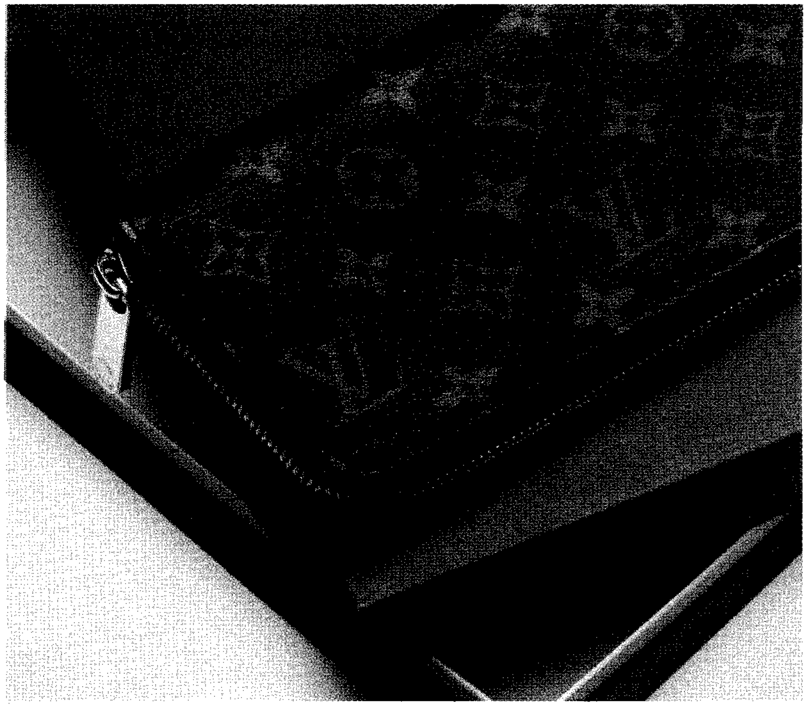
JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—May 11: A tribute to Miles Davis's bebop and cool periods, featuring the trumpeters **Ryan Kisor** and **Terence Blanchard** and their quintets, is a guaranteed crowd-pleaser. The following night features a riskier bill as the trumpeter **Nicholas Payton** and the electric bassist **Marcus Miller** tackle Davis's plugged-in later decades.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—May 8-9: The Israeli-born saxophonist and clarinet player **Anat Cohen.** The first of two showcase nights presents a big band; the second features a double quartet fusing Cohen's four-piece jazz band with a string quartet. May 10-13: The highly touted singer **Kate McGarry** lacks grit, but her musical instincts and taste in supporting musicians are sure; her band includes the saxophonist **Donny McCaslin** and the drummer **Gregory Hutchinson.**

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000, ext. 344)—May 11: The **Execution Quintet** brings together two members of Dave Holland's big band—the trombonist **Josh Roseman** and the trumpeter **Alex Sipiagin. Myron Walden,** on alto saxophone, **Peter Apfelbaum,** on keyboards, **Justin Brown,** on drums, round out the group.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—May 8-13: The **Fred Hersch** trio. The pianist has found musical soul mates in the empathetic bass-and-drum team of **Drew Gress** and **Nasheet Waits.** Proof of their unity can be found on the new album, "Night and the Music," and their bond will certainly be in evidence here. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

LOUIS VUITTON



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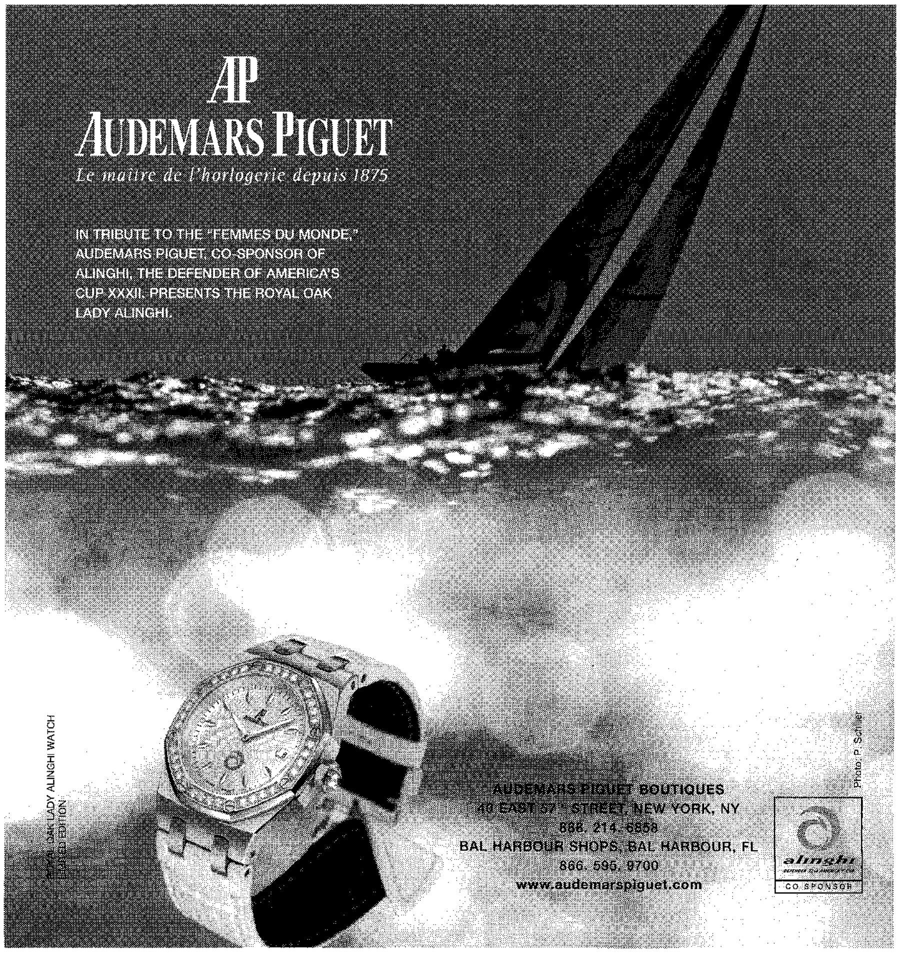

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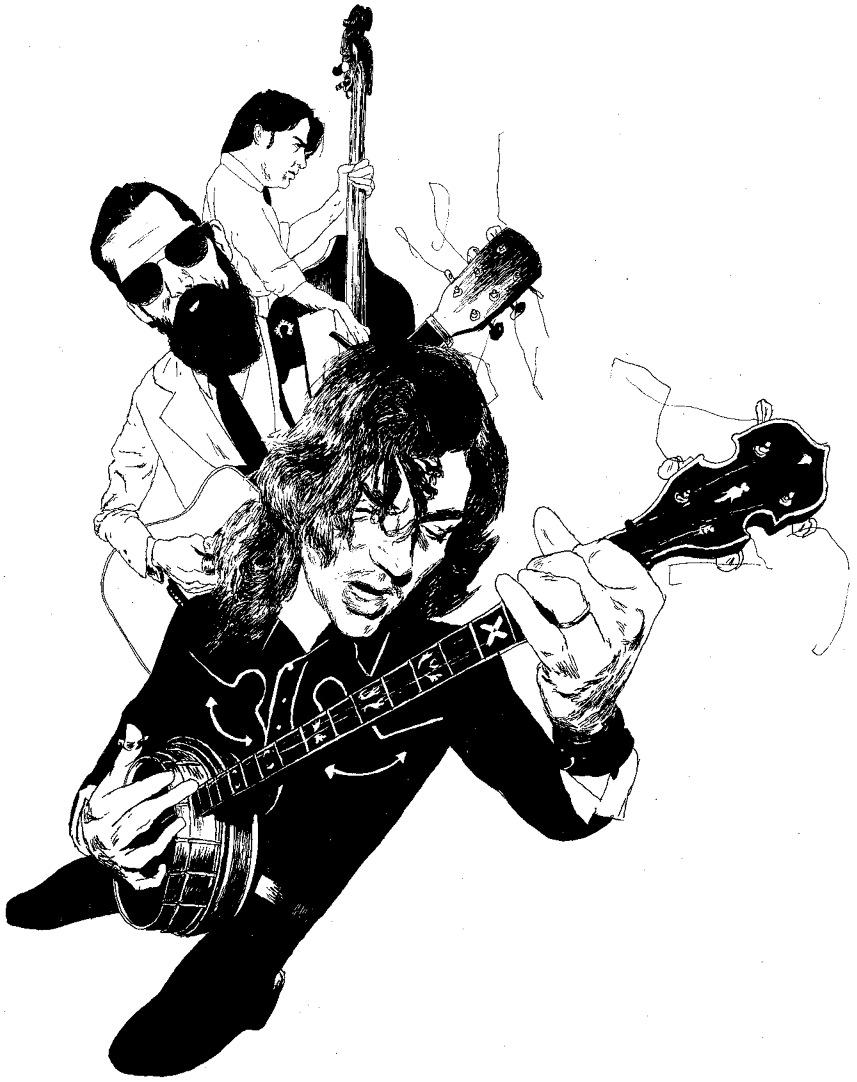
ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Poiret: King of Fashion,"** a survey of the career of the Parisian designer Paul Poiret (1879-1944), opens in the Costume Institute on May 9. ♦ The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden has reopened for summer, with Frank Stella as the featured artist. Recent works in stainless steel and carbon fibre will be on view outdoors through Oct. 28; indoors, **"Frank Stella: Painting Into Architecture"** will present the prolific artist's designs for architectural structures. Through Aug. 5. ♦ The Met's new permanent Greek and Roman galleries are now open. ♦ **"Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797."** Through July 8. ♦ **"Barcelona and Modernity: Gaudí to Dalí."** Through June 3. ♦ **"Louis Comfort Tiffany and Laurelton Hall: An Artist's Country Estate."** An eighty-four-room Art Nouveau fantasia, Louis Comfort Tiffany's Laurelton Hall was built in 1905 in Oyster Bay, on Long Island Sound. Before it burned down, in 1957, its treasures were parcelled out to various collections; regathered here, they establish an atmosphere of swooning luxury. Aestheticism effloresces in paintings, watercolors, Favrile vases, stained-glass windows, enamels, lamps, and even the complete "Daffodil Terrace," an elaborate pergola with glass-bouquet capitals topping marble columns. Interspersed are items from Tiffany's myriad collections, including Chinese porcelains, Japanese sword guards, called tsubas (he owned two thousand of these), Turkish tiles, Indian teaks, and Native American basketry and beadwork from the Northwest coast. Through May 20. ♦ **"Flowing Streams: Scenes from Japanese Art and Life."** Through June 3. ♦ **"One of a Kind: The Studio Craft Movement."** Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Accordions and Harmonicas of the Nineteenth Century."** Through Sept. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Jeff Wall,"** a smartly edited mid-career survey of the Canadian photographer's work from 1978 to the present, makes a persuasive case for his continuing importance as an innovator and an influence while providing plenty of ammunition for nonbelievers. Wall's elaborately staged and digitally manipulated light-box pieces—many the size of the history paintings they allude to—include some of the most spectacular images in contemporary art ("The Flooded Grave," "A Sudden Gust of Wind," "Dead Troops Talk") as well as some of the most puzzling and peculiar. Unpredictable and never uninteresting, Wall challenges traditional notions of how a photograph is made, presented, and understood, redefining the medium in the process. Through May 14. ♦ **"Projects 85: Dan Perjovschi."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Artistic Collaborations: Fifty Years at Universal Limited Art Editions."** Through May 21. ♦ **"Live/Work: Performance Into Drawing."** Through May 21. ♦ **"Comic Abstraction: Image Making, Image Breaking."** Through June 11. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)



The Avett Brothers, from North Carolina, play the Fillmore New York on May 12.

ANDY FRIEDMAN

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"The Hugo Boss Prize 2006: Tacita Dean."** Through June 6. ♦ **"The Shapes of Space"** will open in stages throughout the summer, as restoration work on the Guggenheim's flagship building progresses. Among the works will be installations by Pipilotti Rist, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Piotr Ulanski. Through Sept. 5. ♦ **"Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum: Restoring a Masterpiece."** Through July 8. ♦ **"Divisionism/Neo-Impressionism: Arcadia and Anarchy."** Through Aug. 6. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Lincoln Kirstein"** honors the great esthete, connoisseur, and impresario on the centenary of his birth, with an exhibition of work by three artists he championed: Walker Evans, Elie Nadelman, and Pavel Tchelitchew. Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Gordon Matta-Clark: You Are the Measure."** Matta-Clark is a tricky subject for history. He completed one hectic decade of mature work before dying, of cancer, at the age of thirty-five, in 1978. His major works—abandoned buildings cut into walk-in sculpture—have all been demolished. What remains are films, photocollages, drawings, and sculptural fragments of the building cuts. But even in their capacity as remnants, these tell a vivid story of brash and savvy adventures in what Matta-Clark called "anarchitecture." Through June 3. ♦ **"Taryn Simon: An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar."** Through June 24. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA

120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (917-663-2453)—A slight—or is it tight?—show of aggressively two-dimensional silk-screen, lithograph, and letterpress works, **"Matthew Brannon: Where Were We"** sticks in the mind longer than one might expect. The aesthetic is a little early-sixties *Esquire*, a little chic advertisement; the subjects are sex, work, art, and unbridled consumer culture. Strings of phrases that could have been collected by a subway eavesdropper cohere into satirical, poetic riffs: "Watch out it's a trap / He doesn't mean what he says / They are rooting for you to fail . . . All you got was shame / As you wiped yourself clean." They put a morbid spin on neat little assemblages of everyday images—a tube of toothpaste, a banana peel, cigarettes, a Rolex. The over-all impression is of an overindulged society, jaded from too much spare time and disposable income. Through Aug. 26. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

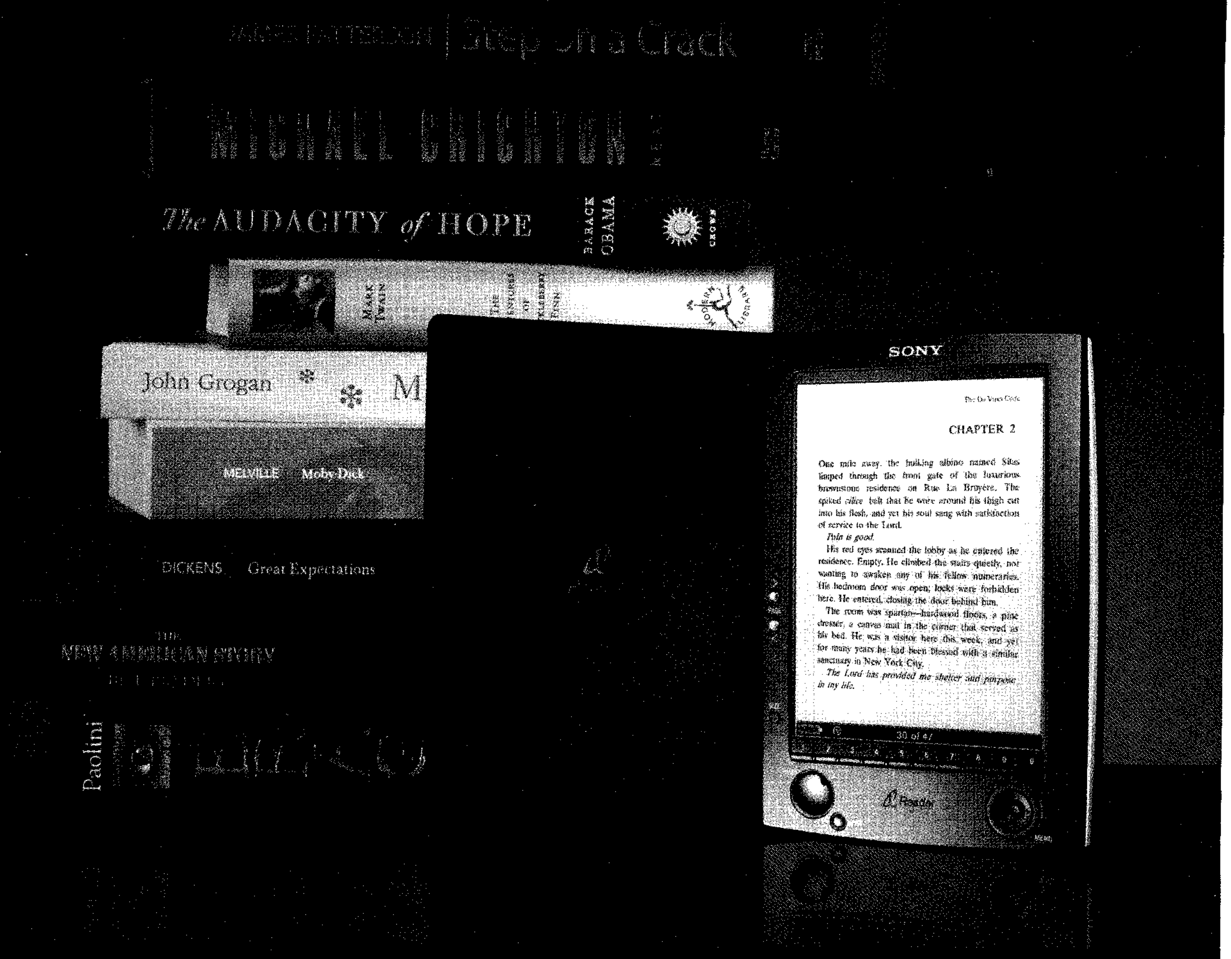
AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Gold."** Through Aug. 19. ♦ The walk-through vivarium at **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter"** is filled with hundreds of lepidoptera, which alight on cut fruit, lush vegetation, and visitors. Through May 28. ♦ The newly opened Anne and Bernard Spitzer Hall of Human Origins explores the science of evolution. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Kindred Spirits: Asher B. Durand and the American Landscape."** Through July 29. ♦ The Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art includes a permanent installation of Judy Chicago's **"The Dinner Party."** ♦ **"Global Feminisms."** Through July 1. ♦ **"Landscapes from the Age of Impressionism."** Americans were big buyers of Impressionist art, which explains the depth of Stateside museum holdings. The Brooklyn Museum sifts through its collection to mount this pleasing, if not groundbreaking, show of landscapes by European and American practitioners of the genre. The Monets include the lavender-tinged "Houses of Parliament, Effect of Sunlight" (1903) and "The Doge's Palace in Venice," and they're joined by works from Impressionist standard-bearers like Sisley, Pissarro, and Renoir, and from proto-Impressionists like Charles-François Daubigny. The American artists include John Singer Sargent, understandably better known for his portraiture; William Glackens, represented by a local scene, "Bathing at Bellport,

SONY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The Da Vinci Code

CHAPTER 2

One mile away, the hulking albino named Silas limped through the front gate of the luxurious brownstone residence on Rue La Bruyère. The spiked cilice belt that he wore around his thigh cut into his flesh, and yet his soul sang with satisfaction of service to the Lord.

Pain is good.

His red eyes scanned the lobby as he entered the residence. Empty. He climbed the stairs quietly, not wanting to awaken any of his fellow numeraries. His bedroom door was open; locks were forbidden here. He entered, closing the door behind him.

The room was spartan—hardwood floors, a pine dresser, a canvas mat in the corner that served as his bed. He was a visitor here this week, and yet for many years he had been blessed with a similar sanctuary in New York City.

The Lord has provided me shelter and purpose in my life.

30 of 47

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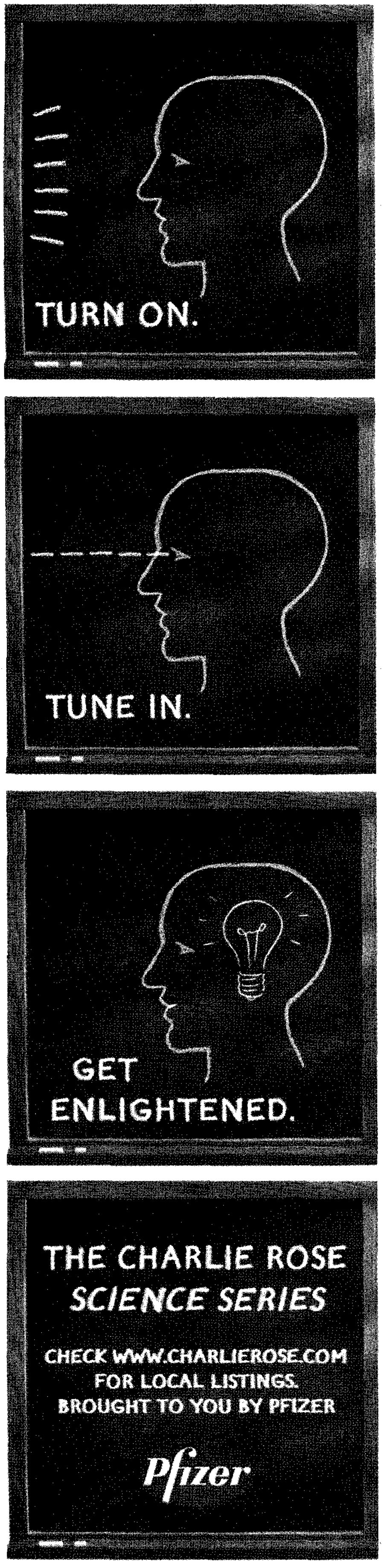
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Long Island"; and Willard Leroy Metcalf, whose "Early Spring Afternoon, Central Park" strikes a wistful note. Through May 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Glass, Gilding, and Grand Design: Art of Sasanian Iran (224-642)."** An examination of Iran's last pre-Islamic empire through its opulent courtly art. Through May 20. ♦ For the exhibition **"Collectors' Choice,"** thirteen Asian-art aficionados from around the country have loaned the cream of their collections. Don't miss the Yongle-era Ming-dynasty ceramics: the white-glazed ewer and vase with barely perceptible incised patterns of flowers are marvels of elegance and restraint. Through Aug. 26. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Design Life Now: National Design Triennial 2006."** Through July 29. ♦ **"Made to Scale: Staircase Masterpieces."** A collection of staircase models, mostly from nineteenth-century France. Through June 3. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"George Stubbs (1724-1806): A Celebration."** Through May 27. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—It's upsetting that participating artists in **"The Disappeared (Los Desaparecidos)"** hail from seven countries, indicating how widespread the repression of dissent was in Latin America from the fifties through the eighties (Argentina's "dirty war" alone is estimated to have killed as many as thirty thousand people). Fourteen artists examine the legacy of kidnapping, torture, and vanishment, in works that for obvious reasons focus on faces and names. Particularly compelling is "Identidad (Identity)," a frieze of photographs, text, and mirrors that was assembled in 1998 by an Argentinean collective, to assist the Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo as they searched for grandchildren who had been disappeared with their parents or born in custody. Three reunions were effected by the installation in Buenos Aires. Through June 17. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Van Gogh and Expressionism."** Through July 2. (Open Thursdays, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"A New Light on Tiffany."** Through July 4. ♦ **"Audubon's Aviary: Natural Selection."** The museum's third exhibition of watercolors made in preparation for the mammoth, seven-volume text "Birds of America" is accompanied by videos, artifacts, and recordings of the birds' songs. Through May 20. ♦ **"The World of Asher B. Durand: The Artist in Antebellum New York."** Through Sept. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Philosophy of Time Travel,"** a collaborative installation made by Edgar Arceneaux, Vincent Galen Johnson, Olga Koumoundouros, Rodney McMillian, and Matthew Sloly. Through July 1. ♦ Henry Taylor started painting as a teen (he was born in 1958), went to CalArts in the mid-nineties, and worked with psychiatric patients for a decade in between. His work is accordingly flavored with an outsiderish directness, insiderish technique, and a profound sympathy for the men and women he paints. The canvases in **"Henry Taylor: Sis and Bra"** were all made in the past five years, and they often merge the political and the personal. Take "Tasered," for instance, a sensitive portrait of a homeless stroke victim who had an unfortunate encounter with some nervous police officers. The mood of the painting isn't outrage—rather, Taylor restores this man to himself, setting him in a chair against a mustard backdrop, with attentive eyes and the forward posture of someone just about to speak. "Homage to a Brother" depicts Sean Bell, who was shot by police on the eve of his wedding, as a larger-than-life figure, his name floating above in shiny cardboard letters, and a personal note pencilled in below. "The Jury" is a sea of blank pink faces rendering judgment on a lone black man, and "Barbecue" shows a naked black body strapped to a hot grill. Through July 1. ♦ **"Silhouette: Collection in Context."** Through July 1. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

"THE END IS NIGH"
A new photography gallery opens, perversely, with a show about endings. Clever, idiosyncratic, and hung salon-style, it includes just over fifty images, many of which have no apparent connection to the theme. But that's not a problem when Susan Meiselas, Josef Koudelka, Peter Hujar, Diane Arbus, and Alex Webb are in the mix, along with Jacob Riis's 1888 picture of an opium smoker in Chinatown, Ed Colver's shot of a body flipping high above the crowd at a 1982 Dead Kennedys concert, and Harry Callahan's deeply shadowed 1949 picture of his naked wife, her pregnant belly glowing faintly, like a full moon behind storm clouds. Through May 19. (Higher Pictures, 764 Madison Ave., at 65th St. 212-249-6100.)

Short List

WILLIAM KLEIN: Howard Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through June 2. **TOD PAPAGEORGE:** Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999. Through May 12. **JAMES WELLING:** Horticultural Society of New York, 148 W. 37th St., 13th fl. 212-757-0915, ext. 113. Through June 29.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

KOTA EZAWA / CHRIS FINLEY / JORDAN KANTOR
This gathering of paintings, sculptures, and light-box-mounted transparencies passes abstract representation through various conceptual frames. Kantor's gray-toned paintings depict monochrome black canvases. They're stylish, quiet, perhaps too clever by half, and look good alongside Finley's riffs on Constructivist sculpture—nonobjective canvases and wooden armatures alleged to have something to do with Nancy Pelosi and Rachael Ray. Ezawa's light boxes reference iconic photographic entities like Steiglitz's Photo-Secessionist group or the Polaroid Land Camera. Through May 12. (Lombard-Freid, 531 W. 26th St. 212-967-8040.)

CHIP HOOPER
Hooper's photographs of New Zealand beaches and seascapes are classically beautiful and restrained in a style reminiscent of Richard Misrach or Joel Meyerowitz, but in rich, subtle, serene black-and-white. Although they're the furthest thing from avant-garde, the best of these images avoid the traps that so much traditional landscape work falls into; no matter how handsome, they're never merely pretty pictures. Hooper nods to history, notably to Gustave Le Gray, but he also acknowledges Hiroshi Sugimoto and Robert Adams without ever losing his own quietly appealing way. Through May 12. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 24th St. 212-989-7600.)

E. O. HOPPÉ
Hoppé (1878-1972), a German-born British photographer known primarily for his portraiture, made these rare and previously unexhibited American landscapes and urban scenes in the course of several cross-country trips in the nineteen-twenties. If few of the individual images are extraordinary, the range of the work is, and the fifty-seven pho-

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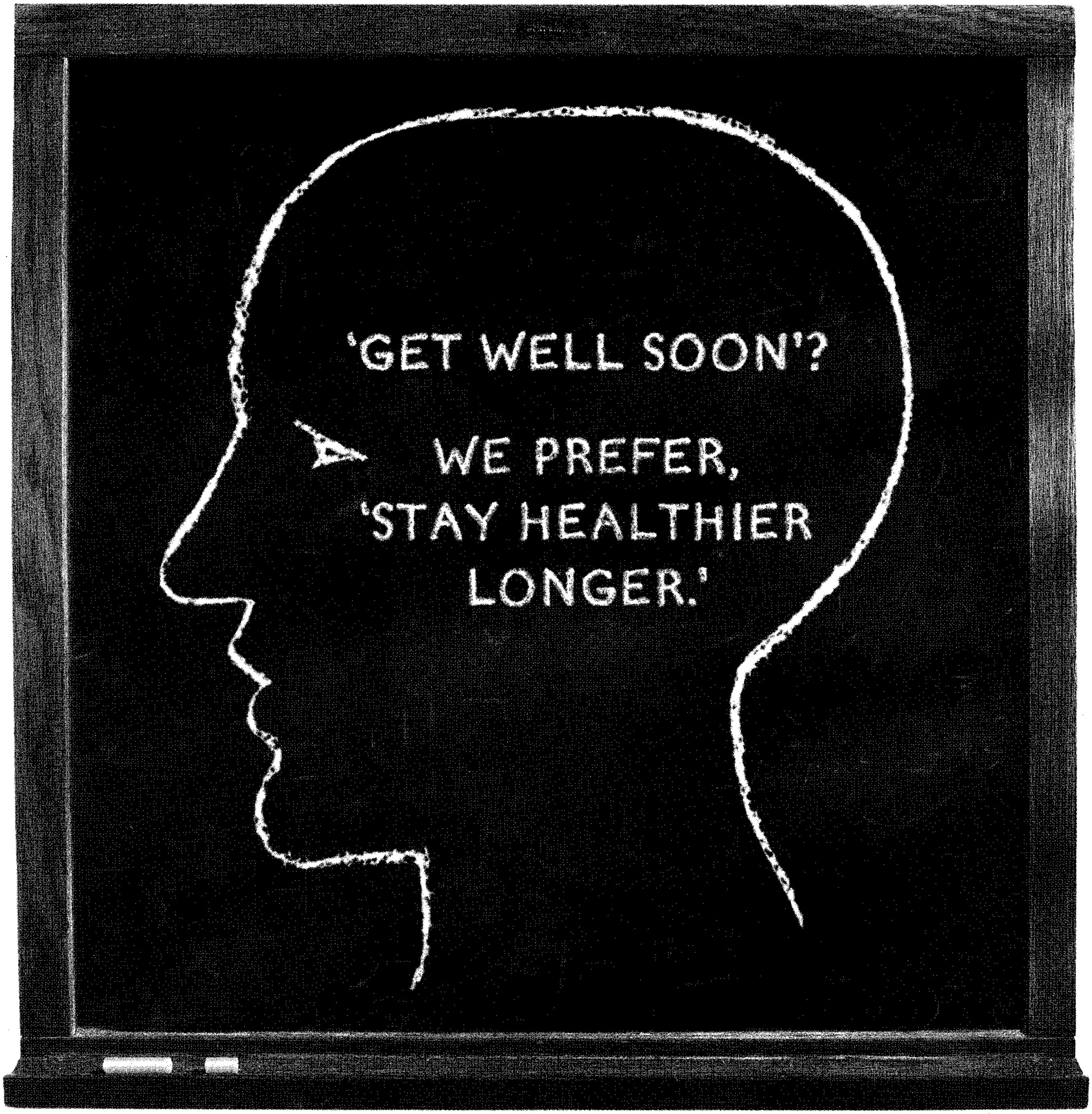
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tographs here make for one of this gallery's most rewarding rediscoveries. Whether his subject is the Ford factory in Detroit, suburban homes backed by an oil field in L.A., or railroad bridges in Key West, Hoppé kept his compositions crisp and dynamic in a style that looks not just modernist but surprisingly contemporary. Through May 12. (Silverstein, 535 W. 24th St. 212-627-3930.)

RACHEL HOWARD

Howard's new multi-floor installation carries the weighty title "Fiction/Fear/Fact." You wonder if this doesn't apply to the act of art-making as much as to her current subject, suicide. Howard follows in the footsteps of painters like Gerhard Richter, mixing representation and smeared, squeegeed abstraction. Tension derives from attempting to distinguish between the two. Here, the long, dripping pours and pulls of paint simulate a body hanging in space. No, wait—that *is* a body hanging in space (on canvas, at least). In Bohen's creepy industrial environs, and in the context of a city district once devoted to the slaughter of animals, Howard's paintings register as particularly chilling. Through May 25. (Bohen Foundation, 415 W. 13th St. 212-334-2281.)

SHERRIE LEVINE

Inaugurating Paula Cooper's latest satellite space, Levine invests heavily in the ironic juxtaposition of kitschy found objects, classical mythology, and sculptural ostentation. A trio of piggy banks and another of driftwood are cast in shiny bronze and christened "The Three Muses" and "The Three Furies"; a wall is gridded with identically framed iterations of a sunset-on-the-beach postcard; there's also a bronze steer skull. Americana is the theme, glorying in expensive trashiness and good/evil oppositions. Whether Levine critiques or colludes is a problem for the eye of the beholder. Through May 19. (465 W. 23rd St. 212-255-1105.)

BILL SMITH

Fractal geometry and biomathematics, fine-grade steel wire and computer chips, breath, shadow, recorded voices, and glass jewels all find their places in Smith's sculptures. The results look like jellyfish or chandeliers, airy and spiky at once. Ideas of order in the universe and beauty as a life principle are invoked. But the constructions are too pretty, too easy, for such deep thoughts—they would look at home in a haute design store, which seems not quite the right place for an assemblage aesthetic based on physics theories. Through May 19. (P.P.O.W., 555 W. 25th St. 212-647-1044.)

CEDRIC SMITH

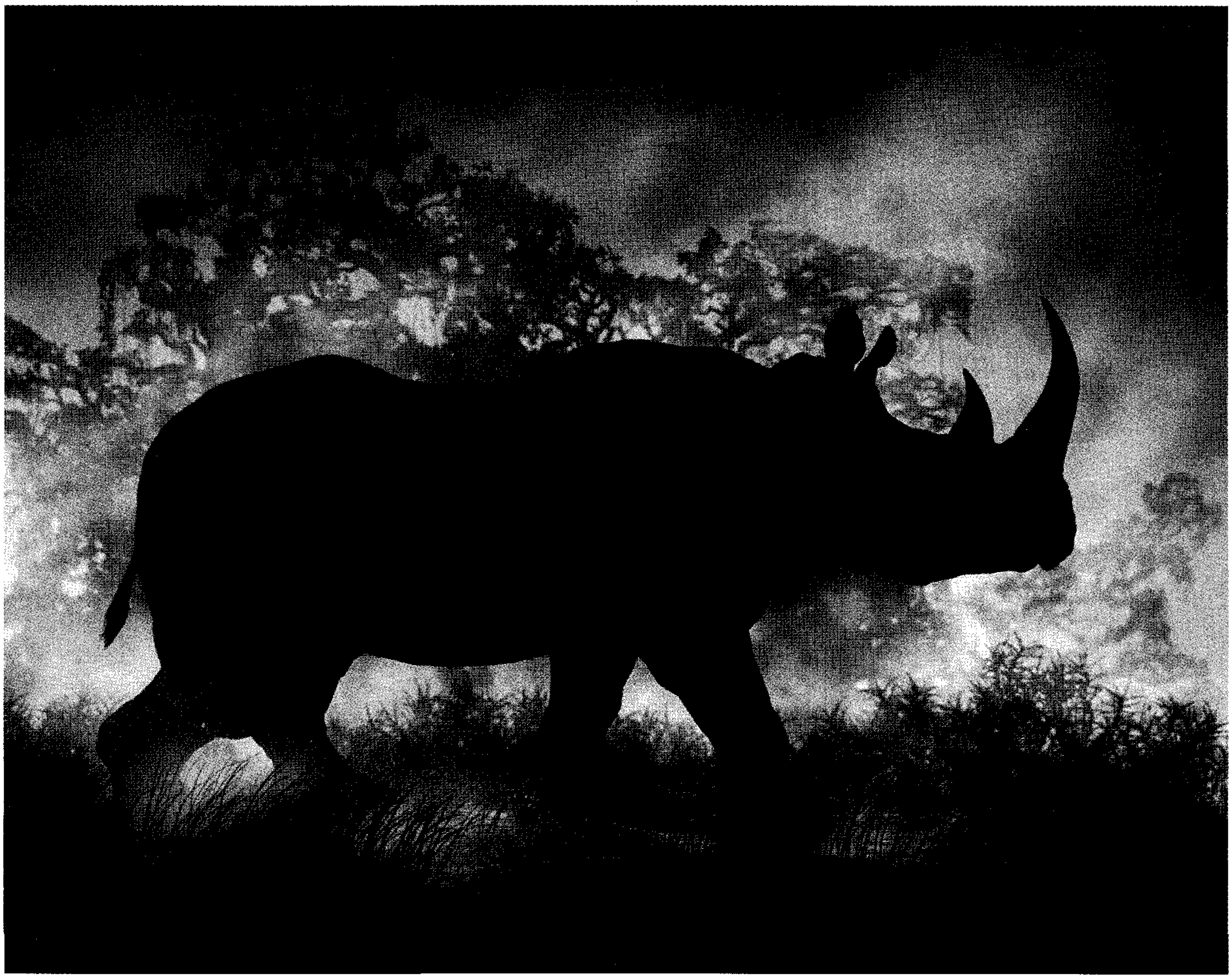
Smith, a painter based in Georgia, who has often collaged vintage photographs of African-American subjects into his work, incorporates the same sort of anonymous, flea-market material into his first show of photographs. In each of the slyly provocative, modestly scaled color images here, an old black-and-white studio portrait has been placed in a resonant Southern setting—a country church, a gazebo, a porch-side garden—and rephotographed. Three ladies in Sunday hats find themselves in front of a van labelled "Church Bus"; little children are perched atop bursting cotton bolls. It's as if these long-gone citizens had come back to haunt the New South and reclaim their place in its fast-eroding history. Through May 9. (Dillon, 555 W. 25th St. 212-727-8585.)

BILL VIOLA

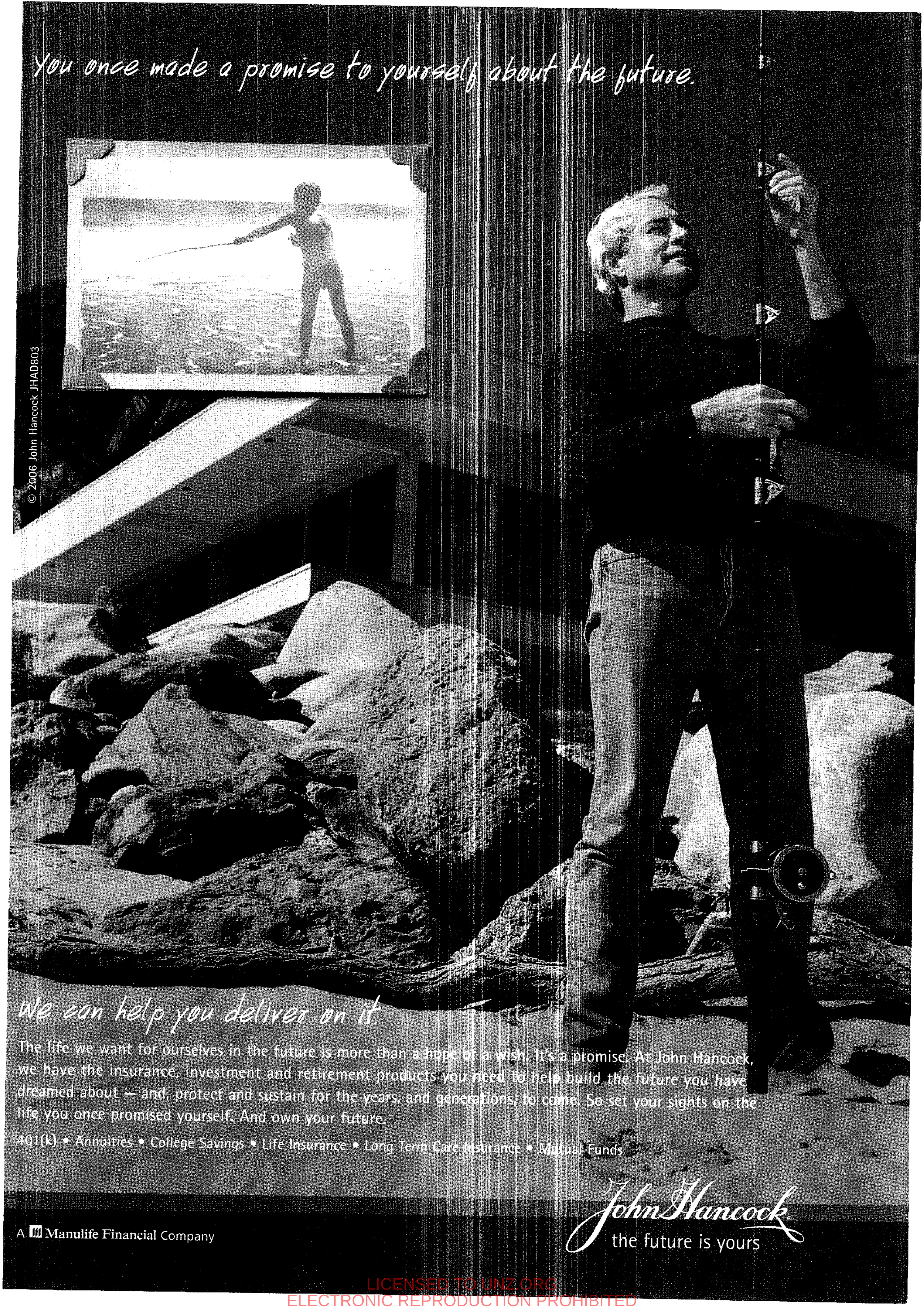
Viola's four-hour video mise-en-scène for Wagner's opera "Tristan und Isolde" (a collaboration with Peter Sellars, with conducting by Esa-Pekka Salonen) was performed at Lincoln Center on May 2 and May 5; here, James Cohan presents three of those stand-alone video segments. "Operatic" is indeed the right word. One imagines that, set against live music, the works would look grand; alone, they feel heavy-handed. A single dot of light slowly enlarges, in the central piece, into a pair of lovers who crash through the surface of a previously invisible black pool to drown ecstatically. A second work follows a lone woman along the same path reversed, as she ascends from waves toward otherworldly light. Lastly, a veiled figure moves away from the camera, enveloped in a shimmer that could be heat-haze on a road, or the reflections of water underfoot. Through May 15. (533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

Short List

KEVIN LANDERS: Dee, 545 W. 20th St. 212-924-7545. Through May 12. **SEAN LANDERS:** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000. Through June 16. **ALEXANDER LEE:** Clementine, 623 W. 27th St. 212-243-5937. Through May 26. **DIDIER MASSARD:** Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410. Opens May 10. **DANA SCHUTZ:** Feuer, 530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700. Through May 19. **SYLVIA SLEIGH:** I-20, at 557 W. 23rd St. 212-645-1100. Through May 10. **SHINIQUE SMITH / MICKALENE THOMAS:** Golden, 539 W. 23rd St. 212-727-8304. Through May 12. **FRANK STELLA:** Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 27th St. 212-563-4474. Opens May 11.



Didier Massard's "Rhinoceros" (2004), from his exhibition "Territories," which opens at the Julie Saul gallery this week.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GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

JAMES ENSOR
Ensor's family owned a beachside souvenir shop in Ostend, Belgium, where he worked all his life. He also helped found the avant-garde artists' group Les Vingt and was ennobled in 1929 by King Albert of Belgium. This varied experience makes a fascinating backdrop for a small survey of paintings and drawings dating from 1876 to 1941 (Ensor died in 1949). An early Cézanne-and-Rembrandt period gave way in the eighteen-nineties to unsettling comic studies like "Masks Watching a Tortoise" (the souvenir shop sold masquerade accoutrements) and "Bathers at Ostend," in which every gelid wave enfolds a cheerfully pornographic, voyeuristic, or scatological vignette. Through May 12. (Peter Freeman, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-966-5154.)

ERIC HOLZMAN
Picture Old Master drawings imbued with the fragmented, self-referential sensibility that used to be called postmodern. It's a fair description for Holzman's lush yet skeletal paintings on paper—except that Holzman's self-referentiality has nothing ironic or distanced about it. His process involves preparing papers with gouache grounds or wet-into-wet *décollage*, and then picking out likely shapes in the mist. Lyrical sketches of the artist's sleeping son, a windblown tree, or a table with a bowl of onions (all made between 1990 and 2007) emerge as life studies, but as if from within a dream where Holzman experiments with being Leonardo. Through May 12. (New York Studio School, 8 W. 8th St. 212-673-6466.)

LAZHAR MANSOURI
The black-and-white portraits made by this Algerian photographer in his studio behind a small-town barber shop are fascinating glimpses into another culture at its most candid. Although Mansouri's pictures have the authority and detail of anthropological documents, they were taken not by an outside observer but by a fellow-townsman—someone who understood how to negotiate between formal and casual encounters in a country where most women did not appear unveiled to anyone but their families. This selection of work made between 1950 and 1970 includes shots of family groups, uniformed policemen, sad-eyed Boy Scouts, long-haired hipsters in sunglasses, and Berber women whose tattooed faces had never been seen outside their own homes. Through May 12. (Westwood, 568 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-925-5700.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
This is the second (and final) week of Peter Martins's "Romeo + Juliet," set to Prokofiev's dramatic score, and featuring several younger dancers in the central roles. The rest of the spring season is grouped into thematic programs, the first of which, "Four Voices," brings together the works "La Sonnambula," by Balanchine, "Moves," by Robbins, "Carousel (A Dance)," by Christopher Wheeldon, and Alexei Ratmansky's "Middle Duet." Ratmansky, at thirty-eight, is the director of the Bolshoi Ballet; "Middle Duet" (1998) was performed here for the first time last season. "Moves" (1959) is danced in silence: Robbins made it while waiting for the score to be composed, then decided not to use any music at all. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. "Romeo + Juliet": May 8-9 at 7:30, May 10-11 at 8, May 12 at 2 and 8, and May 13 at 3. "Four Voices": May 15 at 7:30. Through June 24.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
The company kicks off its eight-week residence at the Metropolitan Opera House on May 14, with a gala comprising excerpts from "La Bayadère," "Romeo and Juliet," "Manon," "Othello," and "Swan Lake," as well as a sneak peek at its new production of Tchaikovsky's "Sleeping Beauty." There will also be a pas de deux made for the occasion by the promising young choreographer Brian Reeder, set to Chopin's "Waltz in A Minor," played on the piano by none other than Lang Lang. (212-362-6000. Gala: May 14 at 6:30. "La Bayadère": May 15 at 8. Through July 7.)

"ORFEO ED EURIDICE"
The final performances of Mark Morris's directorial début at the Met, his third take on Gluck's 1762 work, in which twenty-two dancers, including members of Morris's company, join a huge chorus and the countertenor David Daniels. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. May 9 at 7:30 and May 12 at 1:30.)

DAVID PARKER AND THE BANG GROUP
In Parker's new "Hour Upon the Stage," the dancers stomp, clap, snap, whistle, cough, and sneeze. The sounds they produce are, apart from a few recorded excerpts, the work's only score, but the percussive movement alternates, in fatuous contrast, with balletic leg extensions and port de bras, all sweetness and light. Fortunately, the interplay of masochism and sadism running through the dancers' brawls and their uneasy, fussy duets is more subtle. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. May 8-12 at 7:30.)

URBAN BUSH WOMEN
Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's sassy, powerful ensemble returns to the Joyce with three programs of old favorites, recent standouts, and premières. "Chicken Soup," Blondell Cummings's celebrated 1981 portrait of a woman in her kitchen, joins Zollar's fail-safe rear-end rap, "Batty Moves," as well as her two tributes to Pearl Primus. The young choreographer Camille A. Brown sends the dancers on a quest with a map, and Zollar offers a funky new ensemble piece set to Parliament recordings. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. May 8-9 at 7:30, May 10-12 at 8, and May 13 at 2 and 7:30.)

LAVA
In "Tides," the latest from this all-female troupe, the titular theme plays out in ebbing and flowing lines of performers, video of crashing surf, and a full audience wave. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101. May 10-12 at 7 and May 13 at 5. Through May 27.)

RAGAMALA MUSIC AND DANCE THEATRE
This Minneapolis-based company blends bharata natyam with a modern-dance vocabulary, at the New Victory. (209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. May 11 at 7, May 12 at 2 and 7, and May 13 at noon and 5.)

"E-MOVES"
Harlem Stage's annual dance showcase divides itself into two programs. The first, "E-Volving and E-Merging," concentrates on beginning and lesser-known choreographers, including promising figures like Camille A. Brown, Erick Montes, and Ayo Janeen Jackson. The second, "E-Stablished," focusses on more recognized dancemakers—in this case, David Roussève, who presents excerpts from a fado-based work in progress, and Tania Isaac, who offers one piece that draws on her St. Lucian heritage and another about the vicissitudes of motherhood. (The Gatehouse, 150 W. Convent Ave., at 135th St. 212-650-7100. May 11-12 at 7:30 and May 13 at 3. Through May 20.)

"SONGS AND SHAMAN DANCES OF MANIPUR"
World Music Institute and the Asia Society present Laihui, a traditional music and dance troupe from Manipur, in northeast India. Ritual, storytelling, and dance merge to illustrate episodes from the lives and love quests of various pre-Hindu deities, accompanied by percussion and the keening sounds of the *pena*, a violinlike stringed instrument. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 11 at 8.)

"THE BLACK-WHITE TANGO"
This three-part show by the Argentinean choreographer Dardo Galletto alternates between ballet-inflected tango, tango-inflected contemporary dance, and "pure" tango; performers include American Ballet Theatre's Elizabeth Mertz and Luciana Paris (who is Argentinean), the New Jersey Ballet's Sergio Amarante, and the famous father-and-son *milongueros* Carlos and Maximiliano Copello. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 12 at 3 and 8.)

SARA RUDNER IN COMPANY
In 1975, when Sara Rudner—then in the middle of her decades-long tenure as one of Twyla Tharp's greatest muses—first presented "Dancing-on-View," it lasted five hours. The idea was to break down the distinction between dance as performance and dance as a way of life. Revived by Danspace Project in 1999 and again this Sunday, the installation is a container for the virtuosic and the quotidian alike. Joined by sixteen veterans (all women) and two percussionists, Rudner starts at 5 P.M. and invites viewers to come and go as the sun sets. (Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 W. 37th St. 212-674-8194. May 13 at 5.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

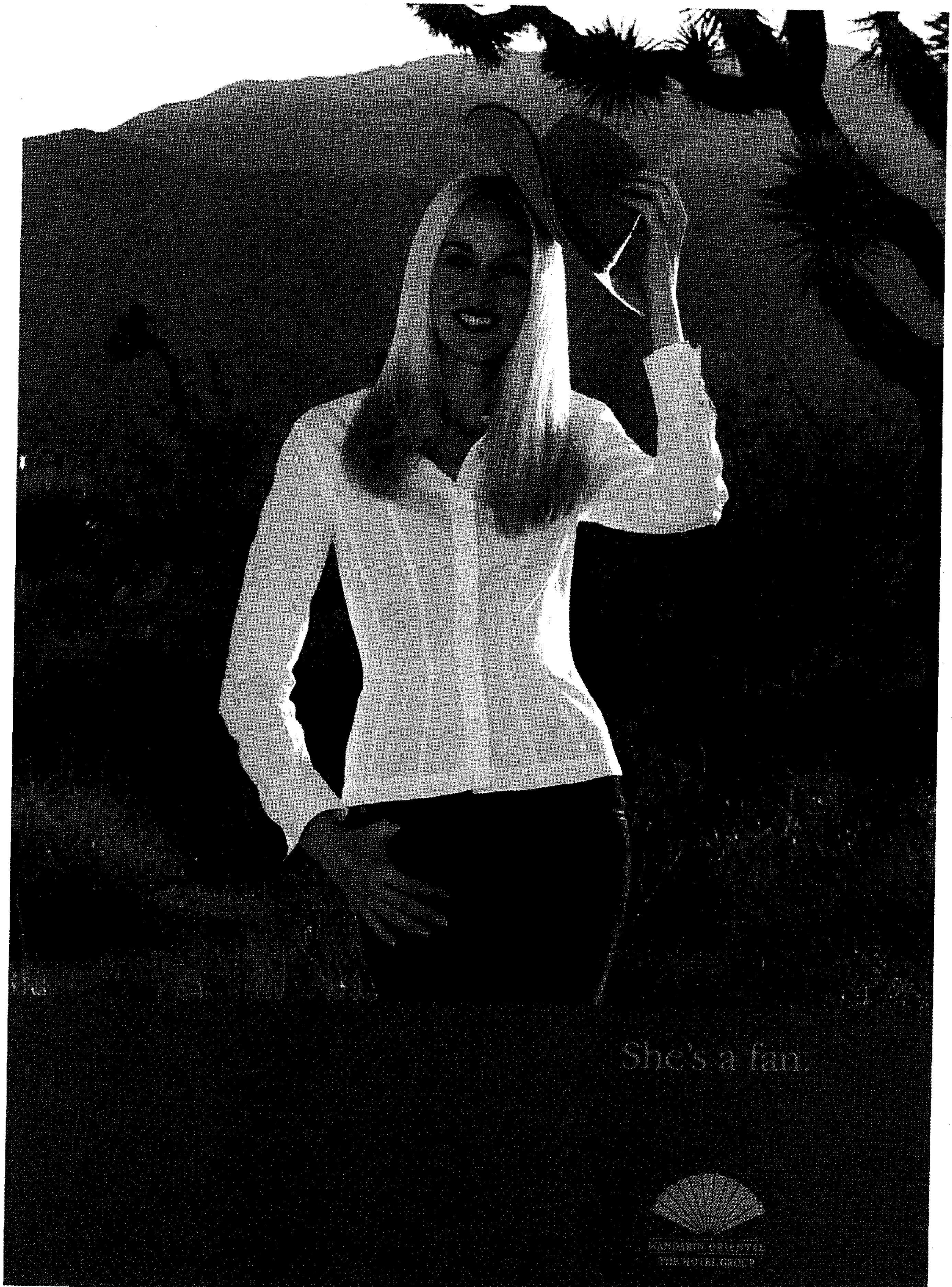
METROPOLITAN OPERA
For the last new production of his inaugural season, Peter Gelb reaches back into Met history to offer the house's first presentation in thirty-five years of Gluck's **"Orfeo ed Euridice"** (in the original, Vienna version), which will be thoroughly reënergized by the kinetic genius of the director and choreographer Mark Morris. David Daniels and Maija Kovalevska take the title roles, with Heidi Grant Murphy as Amor; James Levine conducts. (May 9 at 7:30 and May 12 at 1:30.) ♦ Jack O'Brien's new production of Puccini's three gorgeous one-acts, **"Il Trittico,"** is opera at its "setsiest." The opener, "Il Tabarro," for example, boasts a giant tugboat, a bridge long enough to span the real Seine, and a whole arrondissement of warehouses; the comic third act, "Gianni Schicchi," includes a backdrop of the entirety of Florence. Such onstage spectacles are matched by the grand pit work of Levine and a cast that features the passionate Salvatore Licitra and Maria Guleghina in "Il Tabarro," the swaggering Alessandro Corbelli in "Schicchi," and the rock-solid Stephanie Blythe and the affectingly delicate Barbara Frittoli in the sentimental middle act, "Suor Angelica." (May 10 at 7:30 and May 12 at 8.) ♦ **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** with Joyce DiDonato, Russell Braun, Lawrence Brownlee, John Del Carlo, and Samuel Ramey; Maurizio Benini. (May 11 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000. These are the final performances of the season.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA: "VOX 2007"
The company's annual showcase for new American opera goes from strength to strength, moving this year to New York University's Skirball Center. This year's program includes excerpts from works by such composers as John Zorn ("La Machine de l'Être"), Brian Current, Jenny Olivia Johnson, and Marc Lowenstein ("The Fisher King"), all performed by the singers and orchestra of City Opera. (May 12-13 at 2.) ♦ The showcase also features "Vox: On the Edge," in which four of New York's hardy smaller companies—including the Music-Theatre Group and American Opera Projects—present excerpts from another slate of new operas, including works by Stefan Weisman ("Darkling") and Derek Bermel. (May 12 at 8.) (Washington Sq. Park S. No tickets required. For full schedule, see www.nycopera.com/about/vox.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK
Every so often, the stars align and New York is treated to a feast of fine choral concerts. The first comes courtesy of Kent Tritle's storied ensemble, which will perform two bedrock works by Beethoven: the Mass in C Major and the Choral Fantasy (with the pianist Olga Kern). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 9 at 8.)

THE DESSOFF CHOIRS
Choral programs don't get much more adventurous than this, an evening featuring Hindemith's "Apparebit Repentina Dies," the Weill-Brecht "Berliner Requiem," and works for women's chorus by Bartók. James Bagwell conducts. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-831-8224. May 10 at 8.)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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

The Japanese musician Keigo Oyamada took his stage name, Cornelius, from the gentle ape scientist in "Planet of the Apes." Cornelius's 1997 release, "Fantasma," was a sunny paraphrase of Beach Boys harmonies and Beastie Boys samples, all recorded in extra-high fidelity and edited into a jumpy sequence whose seams were very audible. Cornelius's new album, "Sensuous," has dispensed with most of the songlike bits and left the seams. A guitar note will snap; a snare drum will sound on the other side of the stereo field. The two instruments will alternate until another unit of music is introduced, and so on. Cornelius has taught a band to play these lockstep compositions; on May 10, the Cornelius Group's "Sensuous Synchronized Show" will appear at Webster Hall. (The band members are synchronized, not just with each other but with an elaborate light show.) If Web footage is to be trusted, what is arid and calculated on "Sensuous" has become raucous and elemental in the hands of musicians who, paradoxically, have to ape the precision of machines to make Cornelius's clinical music come alive.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC
Michael Christie finishes the season with "The Ride to Redemption," a concert featuring the première of a staged version of Henryk Górecki's overpowering Symphony No. 3 (with the soprano Nathalie Paulin) created by Ridge Theatre, the masterminds of a daring and youthful Brooklyn sensibility. The program also features Hindemith's deeply spiritual "Symphony: Mathis der Maler" and Mozart's ebullient "Exsultate Jubilate." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. May 12 at 8.)

CAMERATA NOTTURNA
An appearance by the venerable pianist Gilbert Kalish (in Mozart's Concerto No. 19 in F Major) and the New York première of a work by Augusta Read Thomas grace this concert by Jonathan Yates's young chamber orchestra, which also features performances of works by Elgar and Shostakovich. (Church of the Good Shepherd, 152 W. 66th St. May 12 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

THE MET ORCHESTRA
As the Metropolitan Opera's season winds down, its great orchestra soldiers on. In the first of two May concerts at Carnegie Hall, James Levine conducts Mendelssohn's "Scotch" Symphony, Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony, and two works by one of his favorite composers, Elliott Carter. (212-247-7800. May 13 at 3.)

MUSICA SACRA CHORUS
Richard Westenburg's renowned ensemble (also conducted, in this concert, by Kent Tritle) offers a program of exceptional breadth and power, ranging from Tallis's forty-part motet "Spem in Alium" to Schoenberg's "Friede auf Erden" ("Peace on Earth"). The pianist Anthony Newman, in an interlude, will perform Bach's "Italian Concerto." (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-868-4444. May 14 at 8.)

SAINT THOMAS CHOIR: RACHMANINOFF'S VESPERS
John Scott conducts the nation's leading Anglican choir of men and boys in the composer's brooding Slavonic masterwork. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 212-664-9360. May 15 at 7:30.)

COLLEGIATE CHORALE
The group's season closes with a decidedly populist concert featuring Orff's "Carmina Burana" and Brahms's "Liebeslieder Waltzes"; Frank Nemhauser conducts. (Church of St. Paul the Apostle, Columbus Ave. at 60th St. 646-792-2373. May 15 at 8.)

RECITALS

CONTINUUM: TANIA LEÓN RETROSPECTIVE
Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs's expert ensemble, longtime advocates for the Cuban-American composer's complex and vibrant music, offer a range of her works, including "Satiné," for two pianos, and the world première of "Abanico," for violin and computer. (Americas Society, Park Ave. at 68th St. 212-277-8359. May 9 at 7.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "WE OPEN IN PARIS"
Steven Blier is the pianist and compère for the festival's latest edge-of-classical concert, a foray into the theatrical worlds of Offenbach, Messager, and Cole Porter. Sari Gruber and Hugh Russell are among the featured singers. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 9-10 at 8.)

JORDI SAVALL
No other early-music artist can create such an air of timeless wonder as the acclaimed Catalan gambist, who comes to the Metropolitan Museum for two concerts with the harpsichordist Pierre Hantai and the theorbo player Xavier Diaz. May 9 at 8: "Folias and Romanescas," works by Oriz, Sanz, Scarlatti, and Bach. ♦ May 10 at 8: "Marin Marais: La Viole du Roi Soleil" features pieces by Louis XIV's renowned viol player, in addition to works by Bach and Couperin. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
Members of the society (including the cellist Fred Sherry) join the City Opera soprano Lauren Skuce for a wide-ranging concert of new music at the Rose Studio featuring Charles Wuorinen's String Trio, Tigran Mansurian's Duo for Viola and Percussion, and the world première of Bruce Adolphe's "Wind Across the Sky," a song cycle that sets poems by Native Americans. (Rose Building. 212-875-5788. May 10 at 7:30.)

FIREWORKS: "DANCE MIX"
A very idiosyncratic arrangement of Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" closes this concert by Brian Coughlin's exciting post-classical band, which also features music by David Byrne, the Bollywood master R. D. Burman, and a group composition inspired by West African drumming. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 10 at 7:30.)

PIERRE-LAURENT AIMARD
Carnegie Hall's "Perspectives" pianist reaches a new high in kaleidoscopic programming: in two separate events at Zankel Hall, he offers collagelike concerts of works by such composers as Kurtág, Ligeti, Nancarrow, Beethoven (the "Diabelli Variations"), Schumann, Scriabin, Stockhausen, and many more. (212-247-7800. May 10-11 at 7:30.)

DEBORAH VOIGT AND BRIAN ZEGER
The beloved Met soprano and her superb accompanist offer a surprisingly varied program of out-of-the-way works by Mozart, Verdi (a selection of early songs), Strauss, Respighi, Bernstein, and Amy Beach (the effusive "Three Browning Songs"). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 11 at 8.)

MAURIZIO POLLINI
The formidable pianist, who has stayed loyal to the distinguished group of composers he has grown old with, begins a concert featuring Schumann's "Kreisleriana" and Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata with what will doubtless be superlative performances of Stockhausen's "Klavierstück" VII and VIII. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. May 12 at 8.)

CHARLES ROSEN
For half a century, Rosen has been both an eminent pianist and a deeply respected scholar. He celebrates his eightieth-birthday year at the 92nd Street Y by performing Beethoven's last three piano sonatas. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. May 13 at 3.)

"FREE FOR ALL AT TOWN HALL": ALISON BALSOM
The popular series, which boasts a level of talent far out of proportion to its entrance fee, presents a Mother's Day concert by the charismatic young British trumpeter, who with an ensemble of her choosing offers a slate of mostly festive works by Purcell, Handel, Byrd, Falla (a transcription of his "Seven Spanish Popular Songs"), and Piazzolla. (123 W. 43rd St. May 13 at 5. Free tickets, which are limited to two per customer, will be available beginning at noon on the day of the concert.)

DAVID DEL TREDICI SEVENTIETH-BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION
Del Tredici, who is simultaneously one of America's classical masters and an irreverent cultural provocateur, is fêted by the Riverside Opera Ensemble, which will close a concert of works by Richard Pearson Thomas (among others) with the world première of Del Tredici's song cycle "Love Addiction," sung by the baritone Chris Pedro Trakas, with the composer (a stunning pianist) at the keyboard. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. May 15 at 8.)

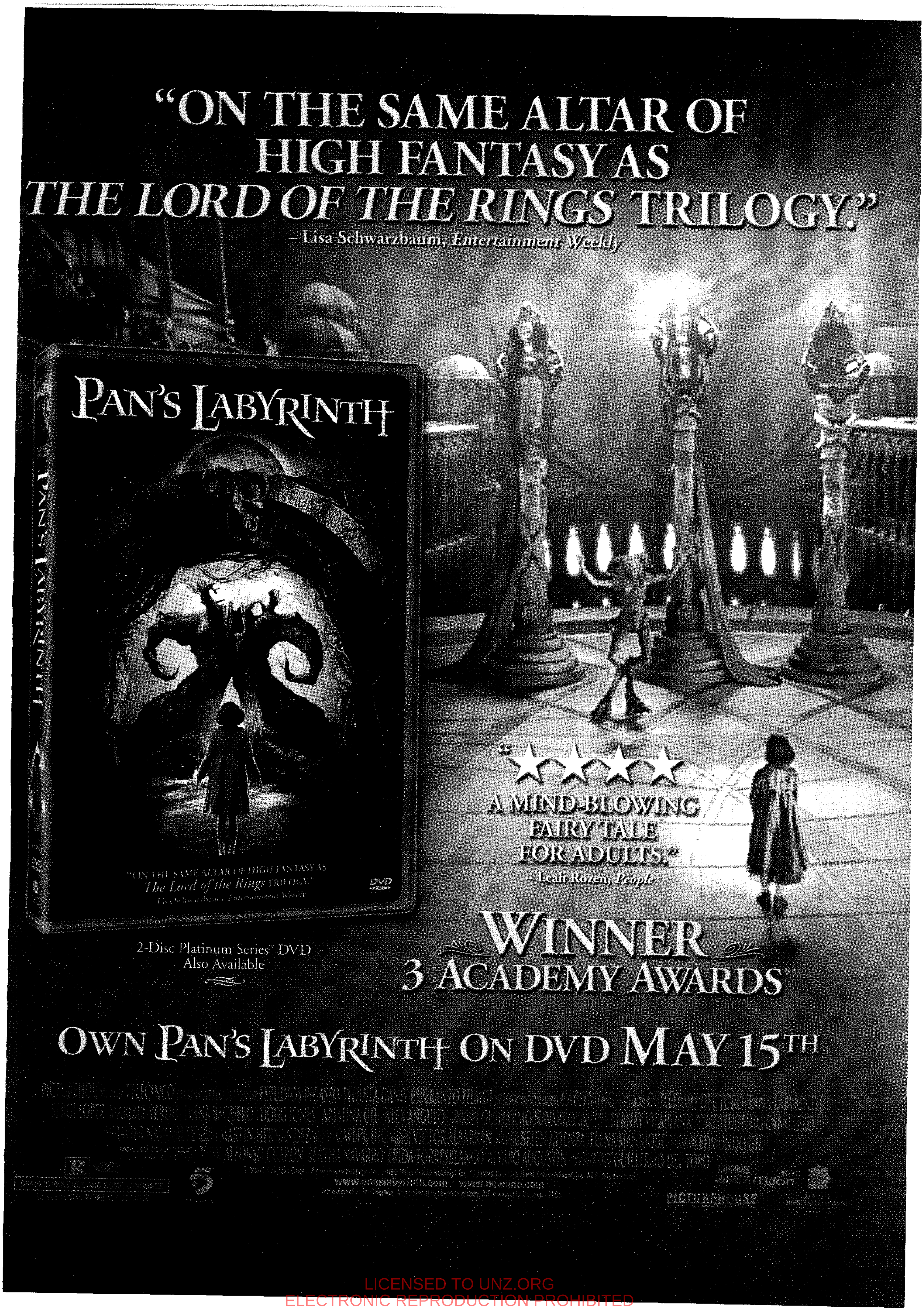
MOVIES OPENING

BRAND UPON THE BRAIN!
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening May 9. (Village East Cinemas.)

CASTING ABOUT
The director Barry J. Hershey compiled this documentary about the casting process from tapes of actresses auditioning for his planned feature film. Opening May 11. (Cinema Village.)

DAY NIGHT DAY NIGHT
A drama, directed by Julia Loktev, about a young woman who prepares to commit a suicide bombing in Times Square. Opening May 9. (IFC Center.)

DAVID NAVASCUES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– Lisa Schwarzbaum, *Entertainment Weekly*

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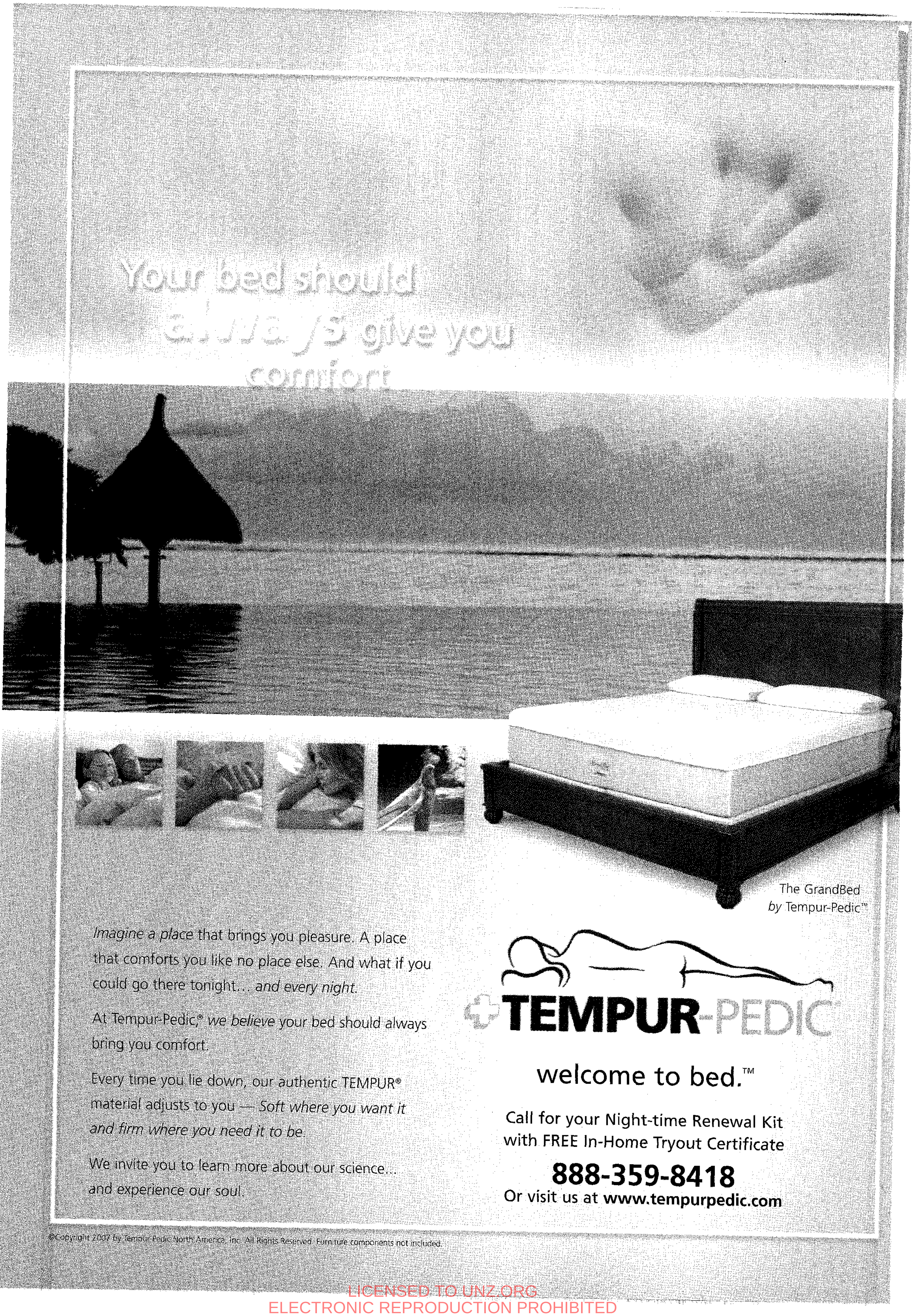

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DELTA FARCE
In this comedy, directed by C. B. Harding, three men mistaken for Army reservists are accidentally deposited in Mexico rather than Iraq. Starring Larry the Cable Guy, Bill Engvall, and DJ Qualls. Opening May 11. (In wide release.)

DISAPPEARANCES
A Prohibition-era drama, directed by Jay Craven, about a farmer (Kris Kristofferson) who becomes a whiskey smuggler. Co-starring Geneviève Bujold. Opening May 11. (Quad Cinema.)

DUCK
Philip Baker Hall stars in this drama, about a lonely man who adopts an orphaned duckling. Directed by Nicole Bettauer. Opening May 11. (Village Theatre VII.)

THE EX
A comedy, directed by Jesse Peretz, about a young idler (Zach Braff) who goes to work for his father-in-law after his wife (Amanda Peet) gets pregnant. Opening May 11. (In wide release.)

GEORGIA RULE
A comic drama, directed by Garry Marshall, about a San Francisco teen-ager (Lindsay Lohan) who is forced by her mother (Felicity Huffman) to visit her grandmother (Jane Fonda) at her farm in Idaho. Opening May 11. (In wide release.)

THE HIP HOP PROJECT
A documentary, directed by Matt Ruskin, about New York City teen-agers who learn to express themselves through rap. Opening May 11. (Angelika Film Center.)

I DON'T WANT TO SLEEP ALONE
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening May 9. (IFC Center.)

LOOKING FOR AN ICON
A documentary about four famous news photographs and their photographers. Directed by Hans Pool and Maaik Krijgsman. Opening May 9. (Film Forum.)

THE SALON
A drama about the owner of a beauty shop who seeks to save her business and find love. Directed by Mark Brown. Starring Brooke Burns, Vivica A. Fox, and Terrence Howard. Opening May 11. (In wide release.)

SHOWBUSINESS
A documentary, directed by Dori Berinstein, about a season on Broadway. Opening May 11. (Sunshine Cinema.)

28 WEEKS LATER . . .
A science-fiction thriller, directed by Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, about an attempt by the U.S. to repopulate Great Britain after a virus kills everyone there. Opening May 11. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

AWAY FROM HER
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

BRAND UPON THE BRAIN!
The filmmaker Guy Maddin needs to get over it. In this grab bag of narrative trickery, he tells the penny-dreadful tale of the house painter Guy Maddin (Eric Maahs), who is ordered by his mother to return to the island lighthouse where he grew up and give it two coats of paint. Upon his arrival, he recalls his miserable childhood there: most of the film, told in flashback, shows young Guy (Sullivan Brown) suffering alongside his older sister, Sis (Maya Lawson), in the private orphanage that his tyrannical mother and mad-scientist father ran on the island. But when teen detective Wendy Hale (Katherine E. Scharhon) shows up to investigate the parents' crimes, she becomes both siblings' object of desire. Maddin pulls out all the stops in this elaborate pastiche of silent cinema, home movies, avant-gardish subjectivity, multimedia spectacle, and Grand Guignol hysteria to get at self-pitying childhood traumas that ultimately add up to a strict mother, a distracted father, the primal scene, and his first crush. The touches of blood ritual, necrophilia, and other fashionable perversities are just for fun: the exciting parts of his self-pitying youth are absurd, and the plausible aspects are painfully banal. (Accompanied by live narration, sound effects, and an orchestra.)—*Richard Brody* (Village East Cinemas.)

DISTURBIA
Judged as an adolescent, suburban version of Hitchcock's extraordinarily sophisticated 1954 urban thriller "Rear Window," this movie, written by Christopher B. Landon and Carl Ellsworth and directed by D. J. Caruso, can rightly be called a travesty. The dopiness of it, however, may be an indication not so much of cinematic ineptitude as of the changes in a movie culture that was once devoted to adults and is now rather haplessly and redundantly devoted to kids. Shia LaBeouf, Sarah Roemer, and Aaron Yoo, aided by enough electronic equipment to open a Circuit City, spy on a suspected murderer (David Morse) living across the street. When he gets wise to them, the picture turns into a conventional (and at times effectively scary) horror movie, with splattered blood and corpses floating in some sort of basement vat.—*David Denby* (In wide release.)

THE HOAX
The barely believable tale of Clifford Irving. He was the joker who, in 1971, declared that he had been contacted by Howard Hughes, who needed a writer to help him with his memoirs. This was utterly untrue, but it didn't stop Irving (Richard Gere) and his corpulent, fretful sidekick, Dick Suskind (Alfred Molina), from extracting an advance of half a million dollars from a New York publisher, with the promise of more to come. The first half of Lasse Hallström's film, written by William Wheeler, zips through these frauds and grand delusions with glee; Hallström seems happier in such slippery company than he did with the sluggishness of "Chocolat" or "The Shipping News." The movie treads more heavily as the story proceeds, as the real Hughes intervenes and Irving apparently starts to lose his mind; yet the result, performed with gusto across the board, still makes a rich addition to the cinema of suckerdom. With Hope Davis and Stanley Tucci in fine fettle as the publishers who fall into the trap.—*Anthony Lane* (4/9/07) (In wide release.)

CLASSICAL NOTES
THREE ON A MATCH

The string trio—violin, viola, and cello—was the Marlon Brando of the Classical era: it coulda been a contender. But Joseph Haydn's invention of the string quartet proved to be an irresistible force; composers rapidly exploited the expanded tonal radiance and richness of texture that the addition of a second violin could provide.

Still, a cluster of new recordings prove the genre's durability. Since Beethoven's String Trio in C Minor is one of only ten established masterworks in the form, it's hardly surprising that it is featured on a new recording, **"Début"** (on Yarlung Records), by the Janaki String Trio, a striking young group from the spanking-new Conservatory of Music at Los Angeles's Colburn School. What is surprising is the fresh and bracing character of the performance, appropriate for an album that also features superb renditions of contemporary trios by Krzysztof Penderecki and the young Los Angeles composer Jason Barabba.

Bach wrote his immortal **Goldberg Variations** for solo keyboard, not string trio. But Dmitry Sitkovetsky's arrangement, heard on a Deutsche Grammophon disk, unpacks the work's intricate network of counterpoint, an exercise at once informative and luxurious. The performance—by the violinist Julian Rachlin, the violist Nobuko Imai, and the cellist Mischa Maisky—is both aristocratic and impassioned.

Schubert's delightful, one-movement String Trio in B-Flat Major lies at the heart of **"The Painter's Music, the Musician's Art"** (Newport Classic), an album that also includes recordings of piano quartets by Beethoven and Mozart. In 1981, Helen Frankenthaler made her friend Constance Emmerich, the pianist of the longtime New York ensemble An die Musik, a collage that was inspired by one of its performances. Emmerich, seeking a way to celebrate her group's tenth anniversary, asked three more painter friends—Kenneth Noland, David Hockney, and Robert Motherwell—to create posters inspired by the composers they loved. Now the recordings have finally been brought to CD: the art works, which are beautifully reproduced in the liner notes, are a touching complement to the group's warm, attentive, and convivial performances.

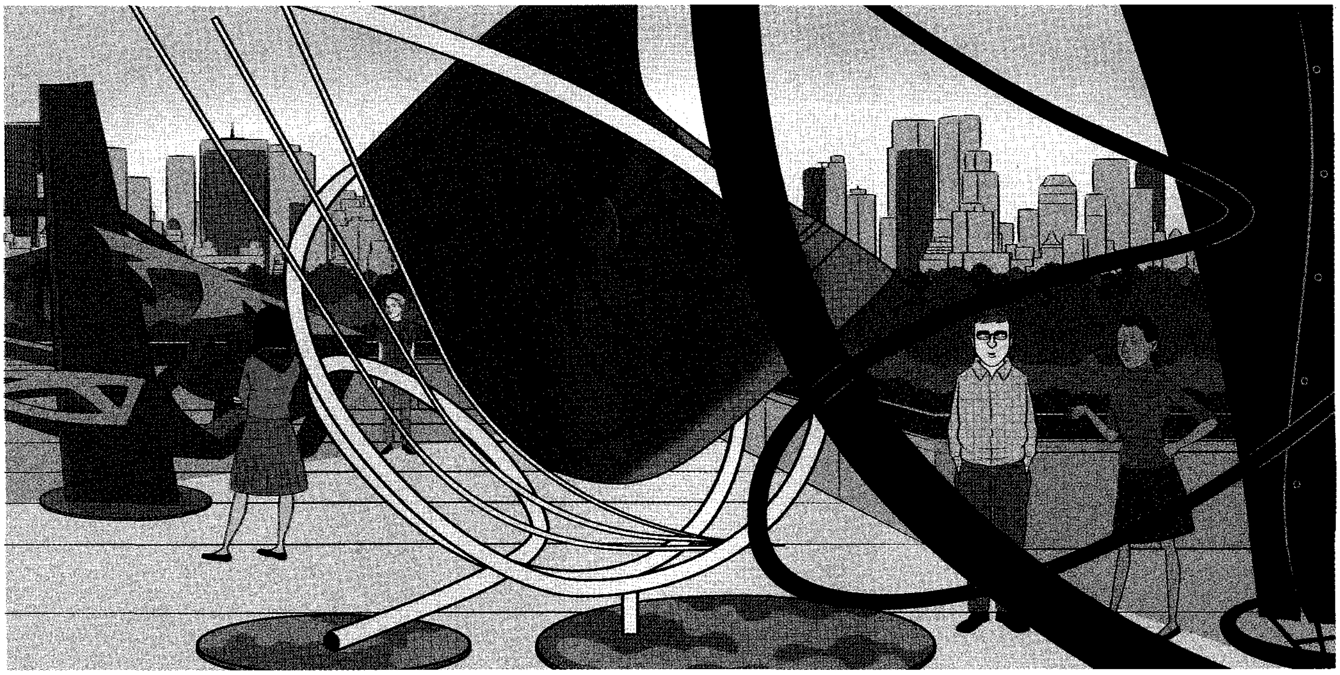
—*Russell Platt*

GRINDHOUSE
A mixture of pop academicism and eternal-adolescent exuberance, this three-hour Quentin Tarantino–Robert Rodriguez tribute to the exploitation movies of the seventies includes two new junk features and such divertissements as trailers for imaginary pictures ("Werewolf Women of the S.S."), ads for nauseating food at local restaurants, and deep scratches on the film, as lovingly inscribed as the speckled antiquing on a blanket chest. In the Rodriguez feature, "Planet Terror," a dawn-of-the-dead fantasia, flesh melts, bodies explode like liquid packages squeezed too hard, testicles roll about on the ground. Some of this is fitfully amusing, but a loving re-creation of something tawdry is not all that different from the original. Even a postmodernist bloodbath is wet, sticky, and red. Tarantino's feature, "Death Proof," presents two lovable groups of women, the second of which takes on a mad stunt driver (Kurt Russell) in one of the most impressive car battles in movie history. Tarantino has his triumph, but he's caught in the contradictions of making an *hommage à schlock*—he can't decide whether to be a humanist or a nihilist, so he opportunistically becomes both. The directors did their own cinematography.—*D.D.* (Reviewed in our issue of 4/16/07.) (In wide release.)

HOT FUZZ
A worthy successor to "Shaun of the Dead," though not a sequel. That dealt with zombies in London; this, even more forbiddingly, deals with the British rural classes, hellbent on preserving their way of life. Simon Pegg (who co-wrote the script) stars as Nicholas Angel, an ambitious policeman consigned, for his own good, to a blameless country town, where he pairs up with an overweight local officer, Danny Butterman (Nick Frost), to chase shoplifters and swans. Needless to say, there are darker crimes to come, and the partners are finally drawn into deafening shoot-outs and high-speed chases—all the paraphernalia of the American cop movies to which Danny is so devoted. Edgar Wright's movie, generous with its gags, doesn't so much spoof the action-thriller genre as pay it prolonged homage, in the most inappropriate of settings; along the way, it finds time to anatomize, as did "Shaun of the Dead," the peculiar lusts and lunacies of modern England—or, at least, that part of it which tries to wish modernity away. With a strong supporting cast, including Jim Broadbent, Timothy Dalton, Billie Whitelaw, and Edward Woodward.—*A.L.* (4/30/07) (In wide release.)

I DON'T WANT TO SLEEP ALONE

The first shot of Tsai Ming-Liang's oblique drama—a paralyzed man in bed, fed through a tube and serenaded by a recorded aria from "The Magic Flute"—sets out the blend of degradation and exaltation that marks the entire story. A homeless man in Kuala Lumpur collapses at the side of the road and is taken in by a Bangladeshi migrant laborer. As the vagrant recovers and explores the neighborhood, he meets the paralyzed man's sister; they become a couple of sorts, spending too much time looking for a trysting place among the hulking ruins of abandoned skyscrapers. But the man who took him in is attracted to him too, as is the invalid's mother (who, in scenes of colossal squirm value, can't keep her hands off her son). This record of grinding frustration and fleeting tenderness, composed mainly of static long takes, plays out in a deadened, polyglot, pan-urban landscape of globalization's unfulfilled promise—instead of a world brought together, Tsai shows natives turned into aliens at home, who remain silent in every language and find even the universal sentimentality of pop music fragmented beyond recognition. His political point regarding Malaysia is sharp and angry: when government, religion, and tradition put desire under an iron fist despite the free market in labor, humans are reduced to beasts of burden, and their desire turns beastly as well. In Taiwanese, Malay, Mandarin, and Bengali.—*R.B.* (IFC Center.)



Sculptural works by Frank Stella are on display in the roof garden at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, through late October.

MICHAEL WELDON

I SHOT JESSE JAMES

A bank teller gives his life to sound an alarm bell, and the James gang is forced into hiding. Living under a pseudonym in rural Missouri, the senatorial Jesse (Reed Hadley), who is married with three children, becomes a contented househusband. His trusted gunman, Bob Ford (John Ireland), nursed back to health by Jesse after taking a bullet in the botched holdup, wants to marry the showgirl Cynthy Waters (Barbara Britton), who wants no part of a wanted man. So Bob, jumping at the governor's offer of amnesty to anyone who captures Jesse dead or alive, shoots his friend in the back, goes from fabled outlaw to reviled coward, and tries to make a living playing himself on stage. This ballad-like Western, the writer-director Samuel Fuller's first film, from 1949, lacks the visual flamboyance of his later works, but packs the full measure of his exemplary rage. The noble, laconic Jesse is no match for the hotheaded Bob's volatile blend of lust and vanity, but Fuller captures, with a Shakespearean irony, the play that catches the conscience of a knave.—*R.B.* (Moving Image; May 13.)

LUCKY YOU

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

PARIS, JE T'AIME

This mixed bag of eighteen very short films about Paris by twenty-one directors is mandatory viewing for its one absolute masterpiece, by Alexander Payne, in which an ungainly, lonesome Denver mail carrier recalls her trip to the city in a broken French voice-over. Some of the biggest names in the batch—including the Coen brothers, Gus Van Sant, and Wes Craven—just tread water, but Gérard Depardieu and Frédéric Auburtin offer a deeply moving scene, scripted by Gena Rowlands (channelling John Cassavetes), featuring Rowlands and Ben Gazzara as an elderly couple postmorteming their dead marriage. In Walter Salles and Daniela Thomas's politically insightful if schematic sketch, a Brazilian immigrant parks her baby in a depressing crèche en route to her job as a nanny. Alfonso Cuarón's clever O. Henry-ish entry features Nick Nolte and Ludivine Sagnier in a single long take, and Olivier Assayas's mini-drama, with Maggie Gyllenhaal as an American actress who grows attached to her coke dealer, has a poignant clincher. Several directors weigh in, if wanly, on a multiethnic society, but few delight in the city's physical or historical particulars. Has Paris become just another metropolis? In French and English.—*R.B.* (Paris and Sunshine Cinema.)

SHACK OUT ON 101

This weirdly funny and bouncy 1955 B-movie, written by Edward Dein (who directed) and Mildred Dein, embroils the denizens of a Southern California beachside diner in nuclear espionage. But this jovial film noir's scruffy, oddball charm comes from what happens between face-offs and showdowns. Each customer is a regular who enters Keenan Wynn's greasy spoon with a big hello, then proceeds to antagonize the help, grouse about work, or spout deep-fried Freud. The male bonding between Wynn and Lee Marvin (as Wynn's cook, nicknamed Slob) is pure straight-faced camp; at one point, they ask the curvaceous waitress, Terry Moore, to decide which of the two men has better legs. Their weight-lifting scene is almost as much of a gas as Moore's make-out session with atomic scientist Frank Lovejoy—she and Lovejoy kiss between civil-service-exam questions. The film boasts vintage fifties slang (Moore is called "the tomato"), Marvin's peerless garter cheekiness, and an off-type appearance by the usually nondescript Whit Bissell as Wynn's traumatized war buddy. Dein and the cinematographer, Floyd Crosby ("Tabu"), keep this joint jumping.—*Michael Sragow* (Walter Reade; May 12-13.)

SPIDER-MAN 3

The third and least of the series so far. Tobey Maguire, looking ever more costive and uncomfortable, returns as Peter Parker, who finds himself doubly transformed—first into the crime-busting arachnid whom we know and revere, second into a black-suited alternative who revels in violence and, for some unknown reason, keeps breaking into dance moves. He is paired with a distracted Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst) and, briefly and more entertainingly, with Gwen Stacy (Bryce Dallas Howard), who looks like a villain waiting to happen. For the moment, we have to make do with a couple of dullards: the New Goblin (James Franco), warmed up from the previous films, and Venom (Topher Grace), a frustrated hack consumed by an extraterrestrial compound. All this is orchestrated by the director, Sam Raimi, with a halting, scattershot approach that verges on panic. The only person to emerge from the wreckage with any credit is Thomas Haden Church, who finds a grainy, melancholic streak in the unstoppable Sandman.—*A.L.* (5/7/07) (In wide release.)

SYNDROMES AND A CENTURY

The American-educated Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul finds much grace in a simple premise: he sets out to depict the lives of his mother and father before they met. In the film's first part, Weerasethakul shows the pretty, lighthearted Dr. Toey (Nantarat Sawaddikul), a rural doctor with two suitors, and, in the second half, Dr. Nohng (Jaruchai Iamaram), a disturbed hematologist, who deals with incurable diseases in a modern military hospital. The cinematography of the first part is stunningly beautiful, conveying the languor of country existence with a rare patience, and lending itself to the oblique storytelling. However, superfluous symbolism—lots of circles, and statues of the long-dead—feels clumsily overt, and interrupts the flow of an otherwise lovely narrative. The cycle-of-life theme is realized more effectively in a dialogue between a young monk and a dentist who share a love of music. In Thai.—*Shauna Lyon* (IFC Center.)

THE TREATMENT

Oren Rudavsky's movie tells of Jake Singer (Chris Eigeman), a flustered and bookish New Yorker; he could be the bulkier, less funny second cousin of Woody Allen's Alvy Singer in "Annie Hall." Jake has trouble with his love life, the specific problem being that he doesn't have one. This is surprisingly solved when he falls for Allegra (Famke Janssen), the widowed mother of a boy in the private school

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The Grosvenor House • June 14th–20th

THE GROSVENOR HOUSE ART & ANTIQUES FAIR

Museum-quality items included in this wide-ranging art and antiques fair date from as early as 3000 B.C. up to the present. Independent assessors authenticate each object available for purchase. Last year, more than twenty thousand people visited the fair—some to buy, many just to revel in its outstanding offerings.

Sadler's Wells • June 23rd

"THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO"

Although "The Marriage of Figaro" is one of the most frequently performed operas in the repertoire, this is the first full-scale touring production in the U.K. to use period instruments. The Classical Opera Company, which is staging the production, is devoted to exploring the works of Mozart and his contemporaries. The company is noted for its discoveries of fresh, young talent.

Various Locations • July 6th–8th

THE TOUR DE FRANCE GRAND DÉPART

The opening ceremony, Prologue, and start of Stage 1 of the Tour de France will take place in London for the first time ever this year. Beginning at Trafalgar Square, cyclists will race past London's iconic sights—the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben, and Buckingham Palace. They will ride along such famous thoroughfares as Whitehall and The Mall, and through Hyde Park.

Victoria and Albert Museum • Through July 22nd

"SURREAL THINGS: SURREALISM AND DESIGN"

The V&A will examine the impact of surrealism on architecture, design, and the decorative arts. Be sure to look for such classics as Oscar Dominguez's satin-lined wheelbarrow armchair, a Salvador Dalí lobster phone, and a Man Ray clothing iron embellished with nails.

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew • September 15th–March 30, 2008

HENRY MOORE AT KEW GARDENS

Twenty-eight large-scale bronzes by the renowned sculptor will be exhibited throughout Kew's 300-acre landscape, making this the first exhibition of its kind ever to be held in London. Visitors will be drawn around the gardens to enjoy the sculptures set against a variety of striking backdrops, from the formal gardens and great glasshouses to the spectacular arboretum.

The 02 • November 15th–August 31, 2008

"TUTANKHAMUN AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE PHARAOHS"

London's first exhibition devoted to Tutankhamun in thirty-five years will be held at The 02, a vast self-enclosed complex replete with exhibition space, shops, and restaurants, and will feature more than 130 artifacts from the tomb of the young pharaoh, his ancestors, and other royal graves. It will be more than double the size of the original Tutankhamun show, held at the British Museum in 1972.

Kensington Palace • Through December 31st

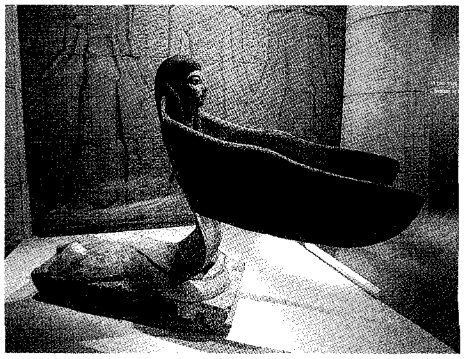
"DIANA, PRINCESS OF WALES, BY MARIO TESTINO"

The iconic images on display in this exhibition, by the acclaimed photographer Mario Testino, were taken in 1997 for what became the last official portrait photographs of Diana, Princess of Wales. Many of these portraits are displayed for the first time. Included will be a number of gowns that Diana wore for the photo shoot.

The Queen's Gallery • Through January 20, 2008

"THE ART OF ITALY"

The first public exhibition of Italian art from the Royal Collection in more than forty years brings together ninety paintings and eighty-five drawings from Britain's royal palaces and residences. Among the paintings, two were previously thought to be copies of lost works by Caravaggio, "The Calling of Saints Peter and Andrew" and "Boy Peeling Fruit." These paintings are now recognized as original masterworks.



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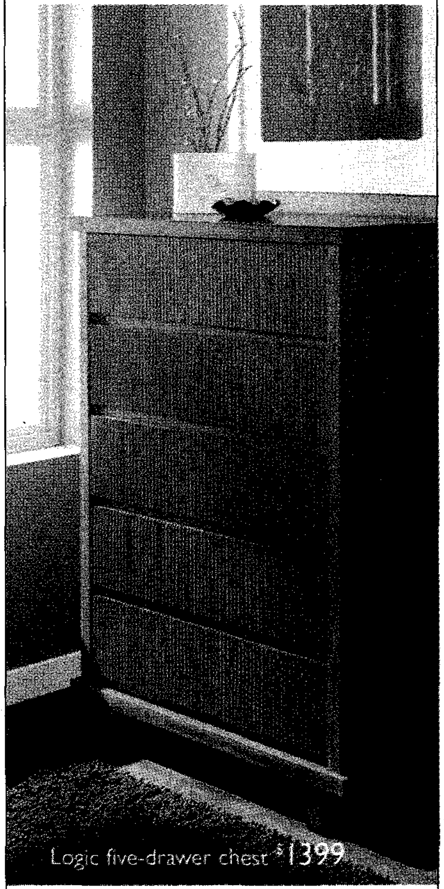

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where Jake teaches English; more surprising still, she falls for Jake in return. Their affair feels slight and plaintive, and the film—adapted by Rudavsky and Daniel Saul Housman from Daniel Menaker's novel—would curl up and die were it not for the bracing presence of Ernesto Morales (Ian Holm), Jake's Argentinean psychoanalyst. The movie flirts with the idea that Dr. Morales might be a figment of Jake's fancy, but to no avail; thanks to Holm, it is Morales—at once withering and enlivening—who compels our attention, while the other figures fade away.—*A.L.* (5/7/07) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TRIAD ELECTION
Jimmy (Louis Koo), a young Hong Kong gangster with a head for business, has turned the page on his violent past. He negotiates big deals with the Chinese government for his vast DVD-piracy operation and envisions founding an industrial boomtown, but his past catches up with him: nabbed on corruption charges, he will be barred from doing business in China unless he can quickly become chairman of his crime family (and thus make himself useful to the regime). Johnnie To's sleek, tight-lipped crime drama offers the strategic intrigue of a mortal chess game before turning midway into a conventionally sadistic bloodbath. To has little moral or psychological insight into his cold, cipherlike characters, but he sketches with brooding delight the conflicting forces that bind them together with the constant threat of mayhem—and this tension proves far more engrossing than the actual outbursts. In Mandarin and Cantonese.—*R.B.* (Film Forum.)

THE TV SET
"Truthfully, 'original' scares me a little," says Lenny (Sigourney Weaver), the TV network head in Jake Kasdan's sharp satirical comedy about the difficulties of getting a series off the ground. Lenny is the chief nemesis of Kasdan's hard-pressed hero, the writer-producer Mike Klein (David Duchovny), whose somewhat daring idea for a show gets squeezed by Lenny into a piece of conventional whimsy. Kasdan is shrewd and funny about such things as the intricate protocol on the set and the diverse ways that powerful people feign sincerity. The satire is unrelenting but not too broad; it stays close to common observation. Kasdan's special target: the astonishing Hollywood habit of presenting even the most negative opinions of a writer's or actor's work in initial upbeat panegyrics ("We loved it! Loved it!"), followed by the inevitable kicker, "But we have some concerns," which, it turns out, completely undermines whatever it was that the writer or actor was trying to do.—*D.D.* (4/16/07) (In wide release.)

VACANCY
Lost on a dark night, a divorcing couple (Kate Beckinsale and Luke Wilson) stop at a nearly vacant motel with few amenities, no phone service, and, of course, a beyond-creepy night manager (Frank Whaley). When they find a videotape of a brutal killing that was filmed in the same room that they are staying in, the horrors begin. This gleefully familiar setup is given an effective, almost theatrical presentation by the director Nimród Antal (his previous film was the excellent Hungarian thriller "Kontroll"), who is an expert at slowly structuring the gathering dread. Beckinsale and Wilson are well matched, yelling and screaming their way through the proceedings as Antal provides the necessary thrills for this compact, anything-but-tidy shocker.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

THE VALET
Another busy French farce from Francis Veber, the director of "The Dinner Game." Gad Elmaleh plays François Pignon, a humble parker of cars, who by sheer mischance—Veber's specialty—ends up posing as the temporary lover of a supermodel (Alice Taglioni). Caught up in the whirl of circumstance are a number of other fools and avengers, including a bewildered billionaire (Daniel Auteuil) and his needle-sharp wife (Kristin Scott Thomas). As ever, Veber piles on the obstacles, but the movie feels unresolved, and it lacks the misanthropic verve of his earlier work; it almost seems to be priming itself for a softhearted Hollywood remake. With Michel Aumont as a hypochondriac doctor. In French.—*A.L.* (4/30/07) (Angelika Film Center and Cinema 1, 2, and 3.)

YEAR OF THE DOG
Pencil, a lovely little beagle living in Los Angeles, dies when he eats something he shouldn't have, and his owner, Peggy (Molly Shannon), grief-struck, screws up at her job, brings home vicious and abandoned pooches, takes up the cause of animal activism, tries to get everyone in her life to adopt a pet, and, in general, withdraws from people and from the world. This first movie directed by Mike White, who wrote "The Good Girl" and "School of Rock," is devoted to the fixations not only of dog lovers but of corporate executives, man-obsessed friends, and parents. White poses his monomaniacs front and center with a lot of space around them and lets the actors (including Laura Dern and Peter Sarsgaard) speak their semi-satirical lines without interruption. He's trying for an effect of deadpan portraiture, and some of his writing has a surprising kick—a few words at the end of a seemingly conventional line that reveal the speaker's sweetly neurotic soul. Still, most of the movie is hard to sit through. Molly Shannon, of "Saturday Night Live," doesn't have much range or depth, and White's sensitivity becomes cloying. The meaning of the movie is: we're all creeps, so just accept your inner cripple and live with it—celebrate it, even.—*D.D.* (4/23/07) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

CIVIC DUTY: In wide release. **FRACTURE:** In wide release. **IN THE LAND OF WOMEN:** In wide release. **JINDABYNE:** In wide release. **NEXT:** In wide release. **STEPHANIE DALEY:** Angelika Film Center.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—May 9-10: The New York Polish Film Festival (for program information, visit www.nypff.com). ♦ The Films of Emile de Antonio. May 9 at 7: "Charge and Counter-Charge" (1968). ♦ May 9 at 9:30: "Rush to Judgment" (1966). ♦ May 10 at 7: "In the Year of the Pig" (1968). ♦ May 10 at 9:15: "Millhouse: A White Comedy" (1971). ♦ May 11 at 7: "Underground" (1976). ♦ May 11 at 9:30, May 12 at 9:15, and May 13 at 4:30: "Point of Order" (1963). ♦ May 13 at 7: "In the King of Prussia" (1982). ♦ May 13 at 9: "Mr. Hoover and I" (1982). ♦ Special screenings. May 11-13 at 8: "For Life, Against the War . . . Again!" (2007). ♦ May 12-13 at 5: "For Life, Against the War" (1967).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through May 20: "Generation Garrel," films directed by Philippe Garrel and featuring the actors Maurice Garrel and Louis Garrel. All films are in French. May 10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Le Lit de la Vierge" (1969). ♦ May 11 at 7: "Dans Paris" (2007, Christophe Honoré). ♦ May 12 at 4 and 8: "Regular Lovers" (2005). ♦ May 13 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Ma Mère" (2004, Honoré). ♦ "Jean Genet on Film." May 14 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Poison" (1991, Todd Haynes) and "A Song of Love" (1950, Genet; silent). ♦ May 15 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Querelle" (1982, Rainer Werner Fassbinder).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through May 17: "Vintage 007 and '60s Spies A-Go-Go." May 9 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "For Your Eyes Only" (1981, John Glen). ♦ May 10 at 1:25, 5:35, and 9:45: "Billion Dollar Brain" (1967, Ken Russell). ♦ May 10 at 3:30 and 7:40: "The Ipcress File" (1965, Sydney J. Furie). ♦ May 11 at 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, and 9:50: "You Only Live Twice" (1967, Lewis Gilbert). ♦ May 12 at 1:40, 4:20, 7, and 9:40: "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" (1969, Peter J. Hunt). ♦ May 13 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Thunderball" (1965, Terence Young). ♦ May 14 at 1, 5:10, and 9:25: "Dr. Goldfoot and the Bikini Machine" (1965, Norman Taurog). ♦ May 14 at 2:45 and 7: "Casino Royale" (1967, John Huston et al.). ♦ May 15 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "A View to a Kill" (1985, John Glen).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of Fanny Ardant. May 15 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Ridicule" (1996, Patrice Leconte; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." May 11-12: "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" sing-along. ♦ Films from NewFest. May 14 at 9:30: "The Gymnast" (2006, Ned Farr) and "The Science of Love" (2006, Joyce Draganosky).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through May 31: The films of Allan King. May 9 at 6 and May 13 at 5: "Warrendale" (1966). ♦ May 9 at 8:15 and May 13 at 2: "Empz 4 Life" (2006). ♦ May 10 at 6: "A Married Couple" (1969). ♦ May 10 at 8:15: "Skid Row" (1956) and "A Matter of Pride" (1960). ♦ May 11 at 8:05: "Rickshaw" (1980) and "Joshua—a Nigerian Portrait" (1963). ♦ May 12 at 2: "Six War Years" (1975) and short films. ♦ May 12 at 4:30: "Come On Children" (1973). ♦ May 12 at 7: "Termini Station" (1990). ♦ May 14 at 6: "One Night Stand" (1978). ♦ "Filmmakers at MacDowell." May 9 at 6 and May 12 at 4: "Joe and Maxi" (1979, Maxi Cohen). ♦ May 10 at 6: "Maria Full of Grace" (2004, Joshua Marston). ♦ May 11 at 8: "Seasons of MacDowell" (2007, Michael Almereyda, George Griffin, David Petersen, and Elisabeth Subrin). ♦ May 12 at 6 and May 14 at 8: "Rain in a Dry Land" (2006, Anne Makepeace) and "Yoohoo, Mrs. Goldberg" (a work in progress by Aviva Kempner). ♦ May 13 at 5: "Hamlet" (2000, Michael Almereyda). ♦ May 14 at 6: "Letters Not About Love" (1998, Jacki Ochs).

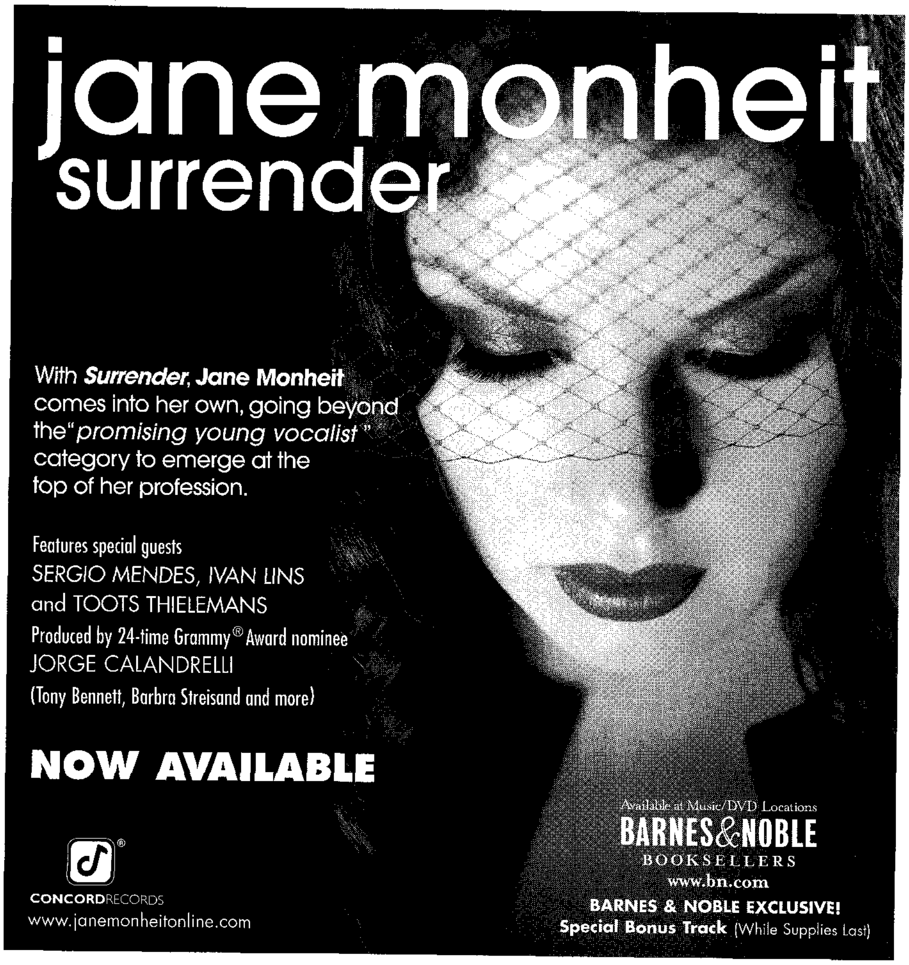
MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—In première. May 11 at 7:30: "Fay Grim" (2007, Hal Hartley), followed by a discussion with the director. ♦ Through June 10: The films of Samuel Fuller. May 12 at 2: "The Steel Helmet" (1951). ♦ May 12 at 4: "Falkenau, Vision of the Impossible" (1988, Emil Weiss). ♦ May 12-13 at 6:30: "Pickup on South Street" (1953). ♦ May 13 at 2: "I Shot Jesse James" (†). ♦ May 13 at 4: "The Baron of Arizona" (1950).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In première. May 9 at 7: "Altered by Elvis" (2006, Tiffany and Jayce Bartok). ♦ May 9-15 at 9: "Allegro" (2005, Christoffer Boe).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—"Cabaret Cinema." May 11 at 9:30: "The Blade" (1995, Tsui Hark; in Cantonese), introduced by Justin Guariglia.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." May 11-12: "Creature from the Black Lagoon" (1954, Jack Arnold), in 3-D.

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—The films of Paul Mazursky. May 9 at 1:30: "Tempest" (1982). ♦ May 10 at 1 and 8:30: "Enemies: A Love Story" (1989). ♦ May 10 at 3:30: "Harry and Tonto" (1974). ♦ May 10 at 6:15: "Yippee: A Journey to Jewish Joy" (2006). ♦ Through May 24: The films of Lee Marvin. May 11 at 2:15: "The Big Heat" (1953). ♦ May 11 at 4:15 and May 13 at 8:15: "Bad Day at Black Rock" (1954, John Sturges). ♦ May 11 at 6:15: "Point Blank" (1967, John Boorman), introduced by the director. ♦ May 11 at 8:30: "Lee Marvin: A Personal Portrait" (1998, Boorman) and "M Squad (Season 1, Episode 21): Lover's Lane Killing" (1958, Robert Altman). ♦ May 12 at 2 and May 13 at 4:30: "Prime Cut" (1972, Michael Ritchie). ♦ May 12 at 4 and May 14 at 3:30: "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance" (1962, John Ford). ♦ May 12 at 6:30 and May 15 at 1: "Hell in the Pacific" (1968, John Boorman). ♦ May 12 at 9 and May 13 at 6:30: "Shack Out on 101" (†). ♦ May 13 at 1:15: "The Big Red One" (1980, Samuel Fuller). ♦ May 14 at 1:30 and May 15 at 8:30: "Cat Ballou" (1965, Elliot Silverstein). ♦ May 14 at 6:30: "The Iceman Cometh" (1973, John Frankenheimer).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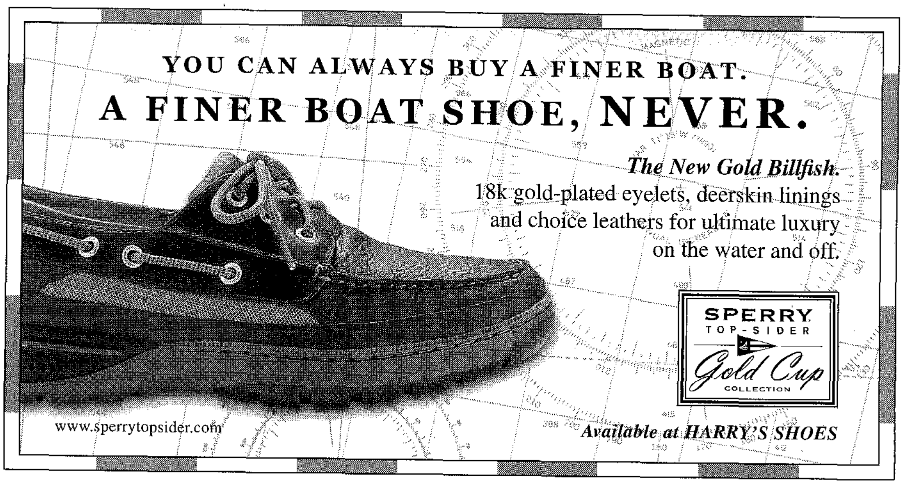
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READINGS AND TALKS

ASIA SOCIETY
Nayan Chanda, of the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, discusses his new book, "Bound Together: How Traders, Preachers, Adventurers, and Warriors Shaped Globalization," with the *Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman. (Park Ave. at 70th St. 212-517-2742. May 9 at 6:30.)

"SELECTED SHORTS"
The long-running reading series turns to literature in translation, with works by Primo Levi, Hanna Krall, and Can Xue. Introductions will be provided by the translator Ann Goldstein, the *New Yorker* fiction editor Deborah Treisman, and Alane Salierno Mason, the founding editor of the online journal *Words Without Borders*. The readers include Hope Davis and Oskar Eustis, the artistic director of the Public Theatre. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. May 9 at 6:30.)

THE POETRY PROJECT
The project presents an evening of poets and painters, with the Granary Books stablemates Ron Padgett, Anne Waldman, Julie Harrison, Johanna Drucker, John Yau, Archie Rand, Trevor Winkfield, Larry Fagin, Charles Bernstein, and Susan Bee. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door. May 9 at 8.)

BOOKCOURT
Jonathan Safran Foer, Nell Freudenberger, Gary Shteyngart, Nicole Krauss, and other contributors to the spring edition of *Granta*, titled "Best of Young American Novelists 2," read from their fiction. (163 Court St., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary. May 10 at 8.)

ADAM GOPNIK
The *New Yorker* writer discusses his collection of essays about life in New York City, "Through the Children's Gate." (Council Senior Center, 241 W. 72nd St. For more information, call 212-273-5304. May 13 at 1.)

NICHOLAS ROERICH MUSEUM
The poet Samuel Menashe reads from his work. (319 W. 107th St. 212-864-7752. May 15 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

SUSTAINABLE BUILDINGS BIKE TOUR
Ryan Kuonen, the urban-design coördinator for the Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment, leads a leisurely ride through the Borough of Kings, pointing out and discussing, among other things, an environmentally sound subway station (yes, there is such a thing; it's in Coney Island and it's solar powered), vacant lots that have been transformed into urban farm plots (in Red Hook and East New York), and an apartment building in Crown Heights with grass on its roof. If that sounds like a long trip, take comfort in knowing that it ends at the Brooklyn Brewery, which runs on wind power. (May 12 at 10:30 A.M. For more information, visit www.bcue.org.)

BROOKLYN HEIGHTS HOUSE TOUR
The city's first historic district lies just a subway stop from Manhattan, across the East River. It was designated in 1965, to protect Brooklyn Heights' nineteenth-century Federal, Greek Revival, and Italianate residences. On May 12, from 1 to 5, five of the neighborhood's finer homes will be open to the public for self-guided tours. (For more information, call 718-858-9193, or visit www.brooklynheightsassociation.org.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
New York's annual Impressionist-and-modern showdown is a big chance for hedge-fund managers and Middle Eastern oil magnates—as well as their counterparts, collectors seizing a golden opportunity to cash in their prized Picassos and Chagalls—to engage in a money-fed rite of spring. At its evening sale (May 8), **Sotheby's** will be offering works by Monet, Matisse, Modigliani, and Kandinsky, among others; one of the top lots is a delicate still-life by Cézanne, "Nature Morte au Melon Vert" (1902-06), from the collection of the eminent dealer Giuseppe Eskenazi (who has three other Cézanne watercolors in the auction). Making a return appearance is the young boy from Picasso's "Garçon à la Pipe" (sold here a few years back for more than a hundred million dollars), this time in another Rose Period piece by the Spanish master, "Tête d'Arlequin," which comes from an anonymous private collection. A day sale, featuring works offered at more moderate prices, will follow on May 9. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ A portrait of Olga from Picasso's neoclassical period, "Tête et Main de Femme," is one of the prize lots at **Christie's** equally robust evening sale (May 9), as is "Le Pot de Geranium" by Juan Gris, a vibrant composition in purples and greens depicting the eponymous flowerpot, a newspaper, and a window that opens onto a puffy white cloud. Two day sales follow on May 10. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

Stanley Kubrick's "Barry Lyndon," at Walter Reade.

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ON THE HORIZON

ART
IN WITH THE NEW
May 22-Sept. 23

Neo Rauch, the ringleader and lion tamer of the Leipzig school of painters, has made eleven paintings for the mezzanine galleries in the Met's contemporary-art wing. Expect scrubbed colors and crowds of adoring fans. (212-535-7710.)

THE THEATRE
THROWING MUSES
May 23

Kerry Butler and Tony Roberts star in "Xanadu," a new musical version of the 1980 film starring Olivia Newton-John as a beautiful, mysterious roller-skater, who is actually Terpsichore, the Muse of dance, sprung from a Venice Beach mural that doubles as her portal to earth. With a book by Douglas Carter Beane and music and lyrics by Jeff Lynne and John Farrar. (212-239-6200.)

MOVIES
THE RAKE'S PROGRESS
May 27-29

"Barry Lyndon," Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of Thackeray's novel about an outlaw's rise to respectability and fall into degradation, was a flop when it was released, in 1975. Now, it is often cited as one of the director's masterworks. Using a lens made for NASA to film in low-light situations, Kubrick created images of visual splendor. Walter Reade will screen a pristine new print; Kubrick's longtime assistant Leon Vitali and the film's co-star, Marisa Berenson, will be on hand. (212-875-5600.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
QUARTET SET
May 31-June 17

Even for Carnegie Hall, the season-ending festival devoted to the Emerson String Quartet is truly rich—eight concerts covering music ranging from quartets by Beethoven and Brahms to a world-première work by Kaija Saariaho. (212-247-7800.)

NIGHT LIFE
MAKING WAVES
June 1

The summerlong River to River Festival brings free performances by Joan Armatrading, the New Pornographers, Booker T. & the MGs, and many other acts to downtown venues. (For a full schedule, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com after May 18.)

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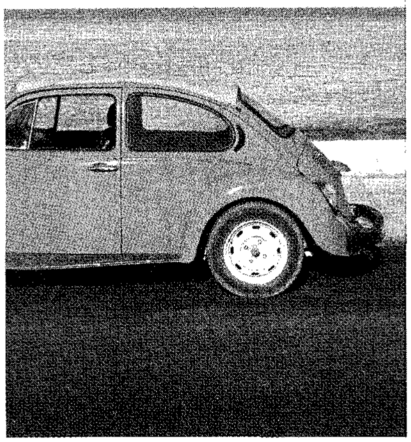

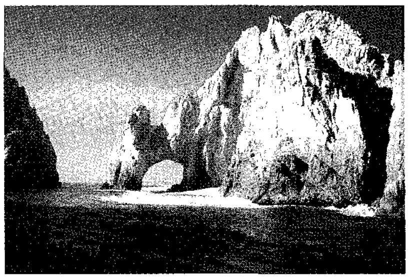

Different Worlds

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At the tip of the Baja California peninsula, **Los Cabos** is a meeting of twin towns. The mission town San José del Cabo, a lush, peaceful retreat, retains its eighteenth-century roots, while high-spirited Cabo San Lucas attracts round-the-clock revelers. East of Los Cabos, the port of **Mazatlán** has unveiled a refurbished city center, which includes nearly five hundred buildings designated as national historic landmarks, and features an array of shops, museums, art galleries, and restaurants.

Along the Pacific Coast, **Puerto Vallarta**, in the state of Jalisco, made headlines when Richard Burton romanced Elizabeth Taylor there while he filmed "Night of the Iguana" in the early nineteen-sixties. Today, art galleries and fine dining establishments are the star of this luxurious resort town. In the state of Guerrero, the enchanting fishing village of **Zihuatanejo** forms a contrast to the trend-setting style of neighboring beach retreat, **Ixtapa**. Spice ships and pirates have left their imprint on **Acapulco**, and visitors can explore the resort's storied past at the refurbished pentagonal fort, the Fuerte de San Diego, now home to the Museo Histórico de Acapulco. Eco-tourists flock to **Huatulco**, in the state of Oaxaca, where nine bays of sapphire water and more than thirty beaches invite close company with nature, from hiking and biking expeditions to reef diving.

On the Caribbean coast, **Cancún**, a lavish playground for travelers of all ages, is the grand entrance to **Riviera Maya**, a significant strip of sun-drenched beaches, Mayan ruins, and seaside towns that unfolds along Highway 307. **Cozumel Island** attracts divers from around the world who come to explore the undersea life and the sunken hulls of Spanish galleons.

Mérida, the capital city of the state of Yucatán, captures the charm of colonial Mexico with its white limestone buildings, yet is bustling with contemporary culture. In **Mexico City**, aficionados of art and architecture are drawn to treasures such as the Palacio Nacional, with its impressive Diego Rivera murals.

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: PAINTED PLATES, SAN JOSE DEL CABO ©DAVID SANGER PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY; CAR AT THE BEACH, COZUMEL ©B&Y PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY; GIRL IN PUERTO VALLARTA ©TRAVIS ROWAN/ALAMY; MAN WITH HUICHOL MASK ©JEFF FOSTER/ALAMY; EL ARCO, CABO SAN LUCAS ©STEVE BLY/ALAMY

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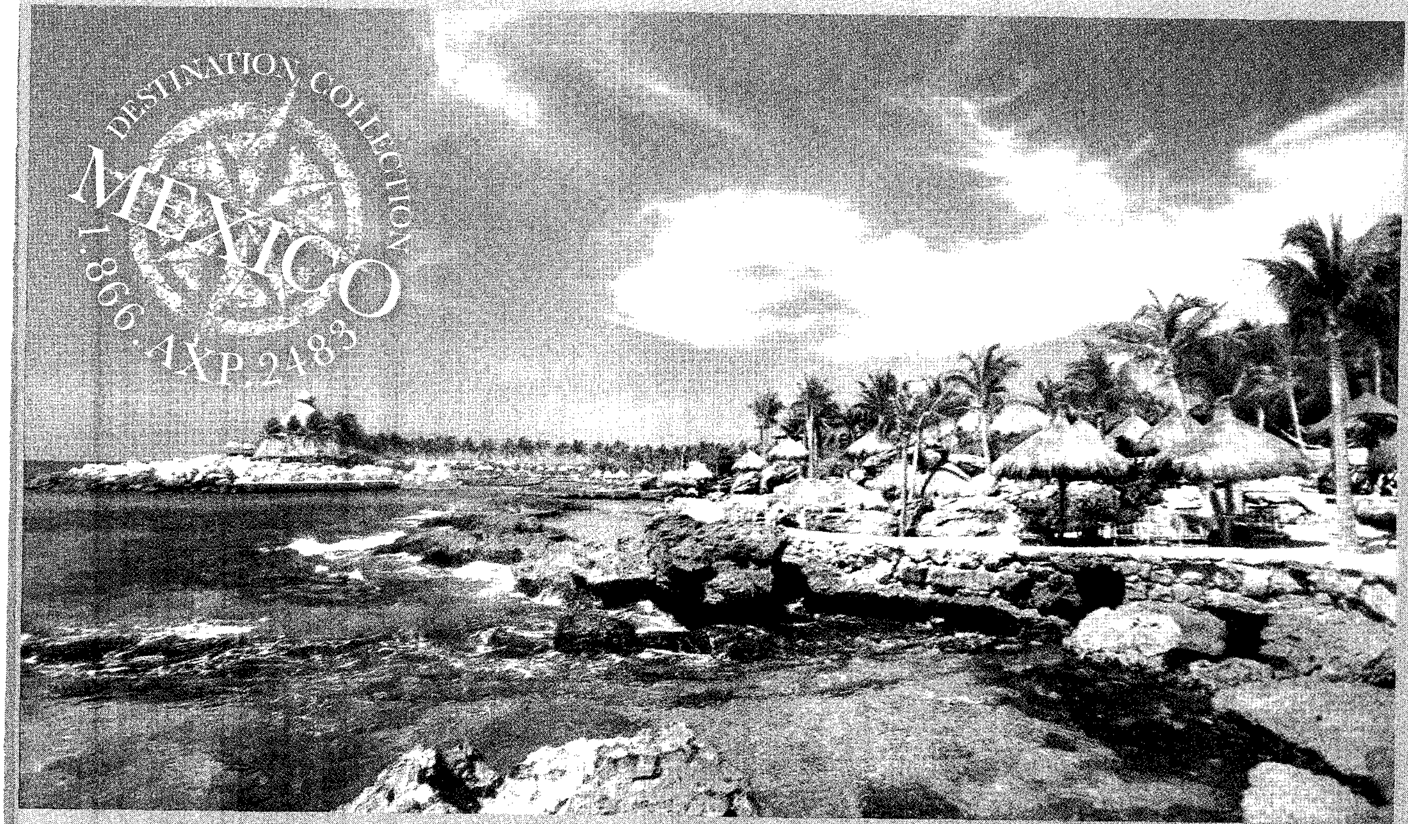

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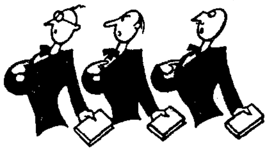
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
NO BLAME, NO SHAME

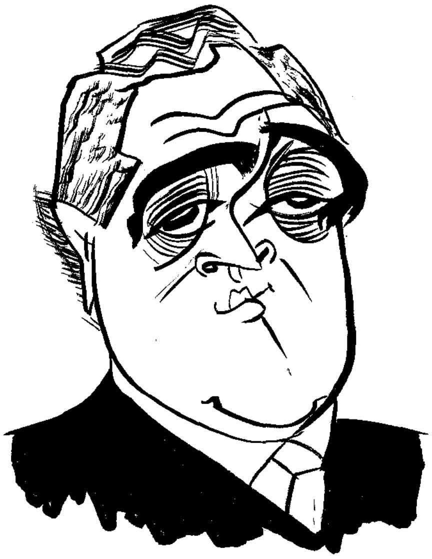


Why has it become impossible to admit a mistake in Washington and accept the consequences? The last time a senior government official quit over his own job failure was more than twenty years ago, when Robert McFarlane, President Reagan's national-security adviser, resigned during the Iran-Contra scandal and, taking accountability to a Roman level, swallowed an overdose of Valium, out of "a sense of having failed the country." (He survived.) Today, this mostly forgotten act of personal responsibility seems rather heroic. Recent years have seen such a steep decline in shame that a book like George Tenet's "At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA," for which the author was paid four million dollars, has become an expected destination at the end of a well-trodden path that leads from disaster through obfuscation and defiance to a well-rewarded self-justification.

The Bush Administration has come close to perfecting the art of unaccountability. Tenet's memoir shows just one of several styles of evasion lately on display: last month, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales's admission that mistakes were made in the firing of eight United States attorneys had the air of a schoolboy hoping that bogus contrition would get him off the hook. "I accept full responsibility," he told the Senate Judiciary Committee, meaning only that he was sorry he had allowed the matter to become such a nuisance. He spent the next five hours explaining—through repeated memory failure and a steady refusal to acknowledge the contradictions and lies in which he kept entangling himself—why he bore no responsibility for anything else. Afterward, the President praised Gonzales for his "very candid assessment" and said that it "increased my confidence in his ability to do the job." This is unaccountability as pure chutzpah, and so far it seems to be working.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Paul Wolfowitz, the World Bank president and former Deputy Secretary of Defense, in answering charges that he favored his girlfriend by giving her a promotion and a hefty pay raise at the bank while holding impoverished countries to a high standard of good government, has taken a different approach. Wolfowitz, in his most recent statement, prepared for an investigatory panel, conceded nothing, and denounced a "smear campaign" waged by his enemies inside the bank. "I acted transparently, sought and received guidance from the bank's ethics committee, and conducted myself in good faith in accordance with that guidance," he asserted. Assertion is the neoconservative style of avoiding accountability: don't give an inch or they'll tear you to pieces. Wolfowitz's ally Richard Perle once said that to express public doubts about the Iraq war "would be fatal." And, of course, the World Bank scandal is all about Iraq.



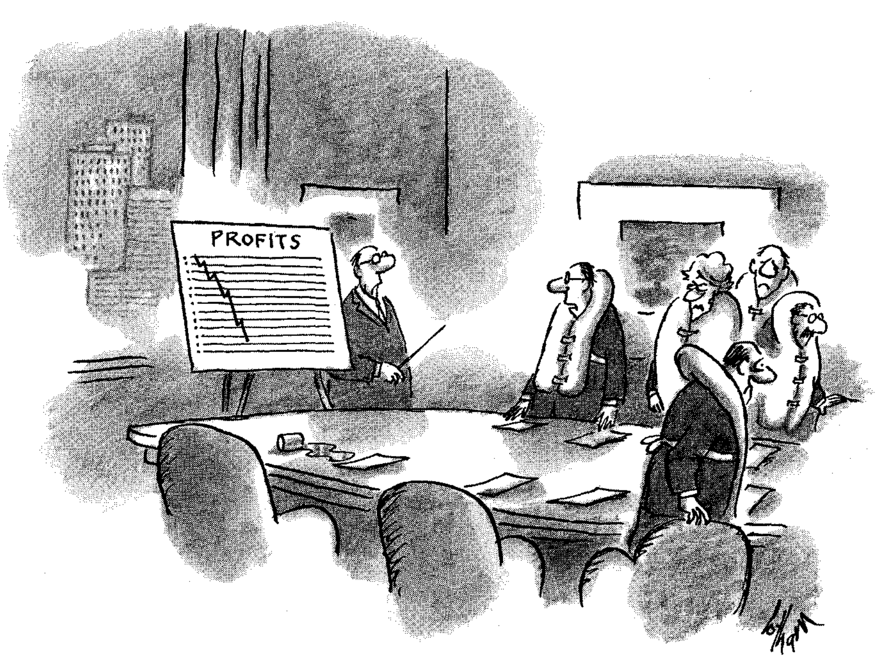
Wolfowitz is as responsible as anyone for that catastrophe, having been nearly perfect in getting every aspect of it wrong. When he left the Pentagon for the World Bank, in 2005, many saw an analogy to the move made by Robert McNamara in 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War. But McNamara was seeking atonement, while Wolfowitz wanted vindication—further evidence of the diminishing power of disgrace in American politics. Wolfowitz, who continues to enjoy the President's full support, has never uttered any serious self-criticism about the war. Like Al Capone, who was nailed on tax evasion, and Alberto Gonzales, who as the White House counsel opened the door to torture, Wolfowitz is being hounded for the blunder because he couldn't be got for the crime. The press is more comfortable with—in fact, is better at—catching important people in fibs and flip-flops than in making independent judgments about something like a war.

George Tenet's style is more subtle and complex. In his book, not admitting a mistake begins with admitting a mistake, then creating an impression of anguished self-scrutiny, which almost immediately dissolves in a shower of equally anguished claims of mitigating circumstances. Addressing the C.I.A.'s failure to adequately alert the F.B.I. that a known terrorist, soon to be a 9/11 hijacker, had a visa to the United States, Tenet writes, "No excuses. However," he adds, "overworked men and women who, by their actions, were saving lives around the world all believed the information had been shared with the F.B.I." It is the same with the slam-dunk quote, with Colin Powell's C.I.A.-approved speech to the United Nations, with the Medal of Freedom the President gave Tenet: the author agonizes just long enough to absolve himself of real blame. Tenet's self-defense is that he's a good-hearted, hardworking guy. And we can only assume from the book's gentle treatment of Bush that he still has the confidence of the President.

These styles of unaccountability would be private moral failings if the stakes were lower. But under the Bush Administration no senior civilian official or military officer has been held responsible for what will probably turn out to be the greatest foreign-policy disaster in American history. (Donald Rumsfeld was thrown overboard only after he became too much trouble politically.) Those in highest authority have been kept in office (Dick Cheney), promoted (Gonzales, Condoleezza Rice), honored with medals (Tenet, General Tommy Franks, Paul Bremer), or sent off with encomiums (Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld). Generals who held command over chaos and looming defeat have received additional stars and more powerful posts, such as George Casey, Jr., who was promoted earlier this year to Army chief of staff. Recently, an Army lieutenant colonel and Iraq veteran named Paul Yingling published an essay in the *Armed Forces Journal*, entitled "A Failure in Generalship." Yingling's open indictment of a military leadership composed of yes-men was the first by an active-duty officer during the Iraq war, and it expressed in analytical terms a simmering rage among lower-ranking soldiers. "A private who loses a rifle suffers far greater consequences than a general who loses a war," he wrote.

Eventually, war enforces its own accountability—though heads might not roll, bodies will render a final judgment—but the point in punishing failure is to correct mistakes *before* a war is lost. Bush's refusal to do so has come at an unimaginably high cost, which will include his own legacy. The most common explanation for this stance is his loyalty to people loyal to him, but folly on this scale is never entirely personal. Bush represents the apotheosis, and perhaps the demise, of politics as war by other means. Bring overwhelming force to the political battlefield without apology, this deluded ideology holds, and reality—even a real war—will take care of itself.

—*George Packer*



"Sorry, but there aren't enough life jackets to go around."

NEWS ABOUT NEWS

PAPER CHASE

In the ninth-floor conference room at the *Wall Street Journal*, outside the office of the managing editor, Paul Steiger, there is a framed T-shirt that reads "WWBD"—or What Would Barney Do? It refers to Byron (Barney) Calame, now the outgoing public editor of the *Times*, and formerly a deputy managing editor who oversaw standards at the *Journal*. A plaque hangs below the shirt, featuring a mission statement, "My Guiding Principles as a Newspaper Man," written by Calame in the nineteen-fifties, when he was a teen-ager and living in Missouri, the son of a minister. The shrine serves as a reminder, in these bloggy, profit-slender days, of the paper's stolid roots.

Last Tuesday, when the news broke that Rupert Murdoch, the chairman of News Corp., had made an offer to buy Dow Jones, the *Journal's* parent company, for five billion dollars, those roots were shaken, and not for the first time: in the fall had come the introduction of a fashion desk ("preposterous!" one reporter called it), then the elimination of all Canadian bureaus; now the "fair and balanced" juggernaut loomed. Work stopped as employees gathered around TVs. Dow Jones stock soared, and staff cynics, who have been resigned to the eventual sale of the family-run paper ever since the demise of Telerate, a Bloomberg-machine competitor, asked one another, "Can I exercise my options?"

A number of reporters who are active with the paper's primary union began e-mailing about a course of action. "I think we need to put together a letter," one wrote. "If we're convinced it's a bad thing," another added. "Dude, it's Mur-

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

doch," the initiator replied. "I'm not sure there's anything worse," a third respondent chimed in. Soon after, the union released a statement: "The staff, from top to bottom, opposes a Rupert Murdoch takeover. . . . Mr. Murdoch has shown a willingness to crush quality and independence, and there is no reason to think he would handle Dow Jones or the *Journal* any differently."

Paul Steiger, meanwhile, sent a memo to staffers expressing gratification at the size of the offer ("a testament to the high quality and integrity of your work"), and advising the rank and file to "avoid getting caught up in what ifs." *Journal* employees name-checked Marshall McLuhan and compared notes on Murdoch's decimation of the *Times* of London, in the early nineteen-eighties, and his reputation for leaking stories to the *Post's* reporters. But the *Journal*, as one former staffer put it, "can be a craven newsroom, and the people there have a beaten-down mentality." Nobody threw a water cooler.

"This is a classic family story," one longtime reporter said on Wednesday, giving voice to a narrative that had taken hold as events unfolded, with members of the Bancroft clan, which controls Dow Jones, rejecting the initial offer, and Murdoch proposing a summit, with his family in tow. Old money vs. new; Northeastern aristocrats vs. Aussie arrivistes—people familiar with the *Journal* mentality offered analogies of a more commercial bent. One employee brought up the sale, in 1988, of the old French cognac company Martell to Seagram, the upstart family-run Canadian whiskey-maker, with Edgar Bronfman, Sr., the chief executive, who has married five times, playing the role of Rupert (who is only on wife No. 3). A former reporter likened News Corp. to the Utz potato-chip dynasty—not a family trust, that is, just a family that happens to own a popular, if junky, enterprise.

These Bancrofts, thirty-odd descendants of the gargantuan Bostonian Clarence Walker Barron, who bought the paper in 1902, include bankers and writers and equestrians. The more senior among them, it is assumed, detest Murdoch, just as their parents must have bridled at the former *Journal* editor Norman Pearlstine's marriage to Nancy Friday, a flamboyant author of sex studies. "But they don't have 'fuck-you money' anymore," a former reporter said of the Bancrofts. "They're nice and rich, but not ungodly so. It matters to the younger generation."

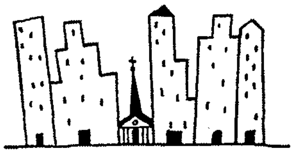
Old empires decline, and emerging ones sometimes mature. An unlikely white-knight theory emerged, in which Murdoch could prove to be "a great sugar daddy," as one reporter suggested. "Like Pulitzer before him, he could go from being a tabloid king to the father of all future journalism. The guy's seventy-six and he's already rich. Maybe it's a legacy thing?" Others suggested that News Corp.'s formidable institutional resources might offer an adrenaline boost to the sometimes plodding *Journal*.

On the page, at least, the *Journal's* austere style has been defended for the past twenty years by Paul R. Martin, who publishes an internal newsletter, "Style & Substance," devoted to identifying encroaching vulgarization in the paper's prose. Martin's old-school operation has now gone wireless, and "Style & Substance" exists as a publicly accessible *Journal* blog. In a sense, it represents the first step toward transparency for the reticent *Journal*. Martin rarely names names, but it's easy to figure out, for example, that the author of a sentence fingered in his latest post for setting a possible record with seven dangling gerunds was Sara Schaefer Muñoz, who writes the new work-and-family blog, "The Juggle."

Barney Calame, reached last week, said he was all in favor of the "Style & Substance" blog. He was familiar with the "WWBD" refrain, although he was under the mistaken impression that the T-shirt had never actually been hung in the conference room. "Frankly, I think it would be a little undignified," he said.

—*Ben McGrath*

DEPT. OF BUILDINGS
BLOWUP



Matteo Pericoli has never felt compelled to keep his drawings to standard sizes. In 1998, he began drawing the entire perimeter of Manhattan on two thirty-seven-foot rolls of white paper. (Pericoli, an architect who now works mainly as an artist, turned that drawing into his first book, "Manhattan Unfurled.") But there is no sheet, or scroll, or any other type of paper big enough for Pericoli's latest drawing, which was commissioned for the new American Airlines terminal at John F. Kennedy International Airport. When it is done, it will be three hundred and ninety-seven feet long and will range from thirty to fifty-two feet in height. The drawing fills a wall that runs the length of the entry hall of the new terminal, and its shape reflects the terminal's swooping roofline.

"At first, I played with the idea of using drawings that existed and blowing them up," Pericoli, who is thirty-eight, said the other day. "And then I thought of putting buildings from cities I liked from all over the world into a single skyline." Eventually, Pericoli came up with a composition that includes four hundred and fifteen buildings from seventy cities. He organized them by instinct, not geography. Hagia Sophia, in Istanbul, is next to the Burj Al Arab hotel, in Abu Dhabi, which is beside an old building in Buenos Aires, which is not far from a building that Frank Gehry designed in Prague. Pericoli balanced tall buildings with short ones, which meant that the Foshay Tower, in Minneapolis, looms over buildings lining a Venetian canal, and the curving tower of the Toronto City Hall gets to play against the curving roof of the Sydney Opera House. He also decided to add a building that never existed, an imaginary, Bauhaus-style structure by the artist Saul Steinberg. The one exception to the geographical mélange is a cluster of New York buildings at one end. Pericoli made this grouping to represent the notion that it is from New York that you fly off to see the rest of the world.

Pericoli's freehand style is both precise and gentle: the buildings are meticulously detailed, but they are all washed with soft accents of blue and golden orange. Pericoli was as indifferent to scale as he was to geography. In his fantasy skyline, the Sears Tower, in Chicago, is smaller than the Brooklyn Bridge, and the Transamerica Pyramid, in San Francisco, is as high as the Eiffel Tower. "When you return from a journey to Rome, the Pantheon and the pizzeria occupy the same space in your memory," he said.

When Pericoli was finished with the

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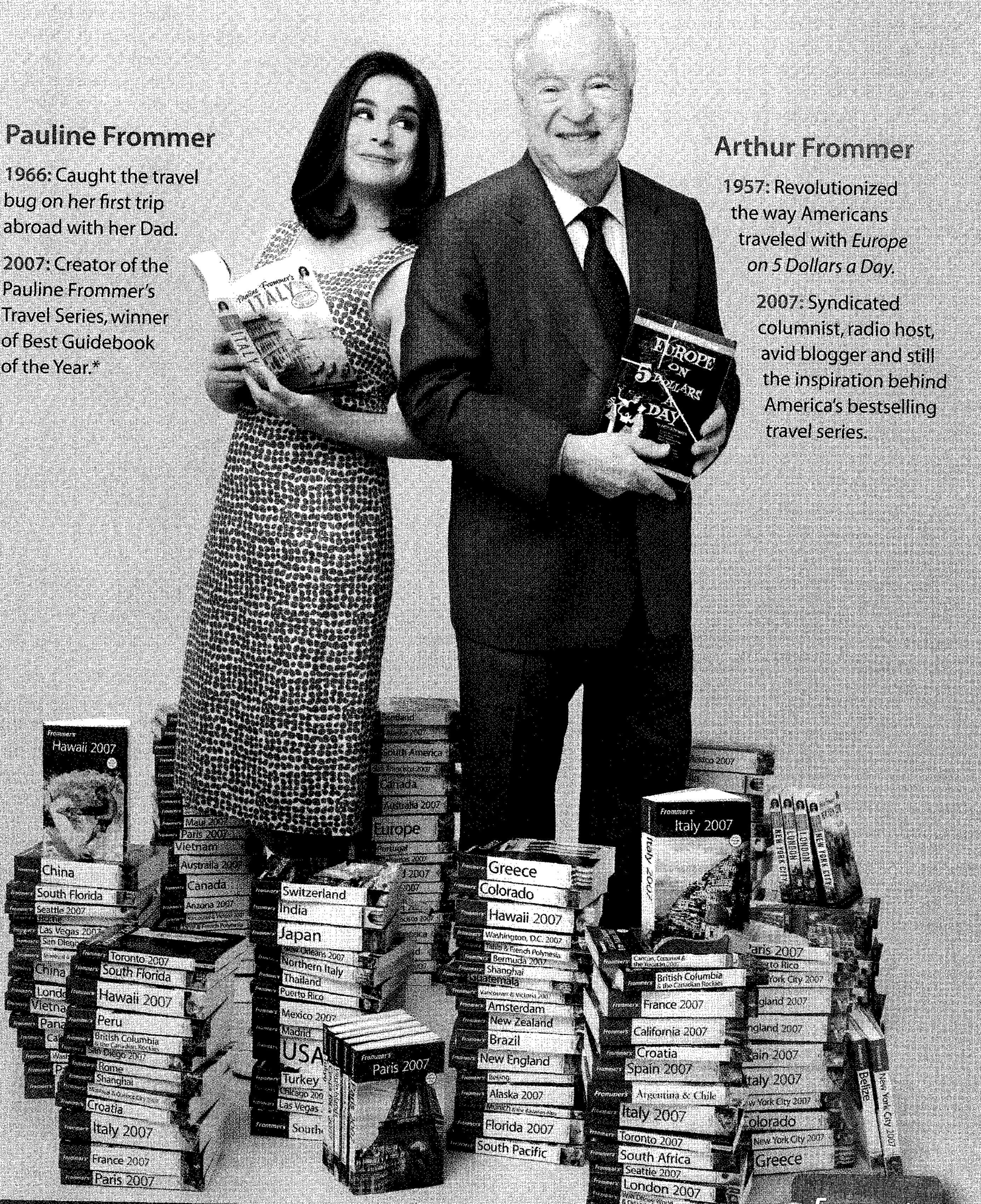
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drawing, which was twelve and a half feet long, he sent it to a graphic-arts company in Chicago. The company blew the drawing up, and reproduced it digitally on vinyl material. The mural had to be divided into ninety-nine sections, each of which takes roughly two hours to print. The company has been shipping about twelve sections a day, three at a time, to J.F.K.

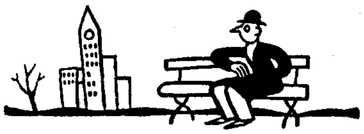
Last week, Pericoli visited the terminal to see how the installation was going. A company from Madison, Wisconsin, which usually handles things like wrapping signs onto Nascar vehicles, had been called to get the drawing onto the wall. "This is the biggest thing we've ever done," one of the installers said. "We need to use a lift, and that's difficult. But at least it's a flat surface."

It takes the workers roughly forty-five minutes to install a panel—longer if the panel covers an air vent and tiny slits have to be made in the vinyl and folded over louvres in the vent. When Pericoli was there, the team was making good progress. Pericoli got on the phone to the printer. "They are doing the Brooklyn Bridge now and they have gone as far left as Dubai," he said. He was thrilled with the way the drawing looked. "The colors are just incredible," he said. "They managed to re-create the feeling of colored pencils."

Pericoli turned and watched the installers smooth out another panel. "When it is all done, I will go up with them on the lift and sign it," he said.

—Paul Goldberger

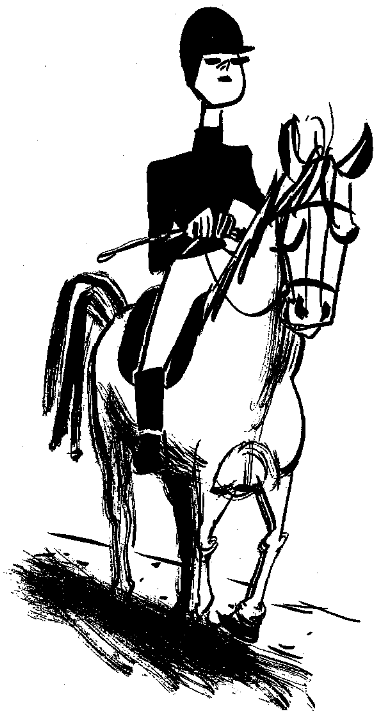
INTO THE SUNSET
HORSE TALK



Horses once abounded in New York, with a hundred and twenty thousand of them still in residence in 1908, when a reporter called them "an economic burden, an affront to cleanliness, and a terrible tax upon human life." Their numbers declined precipitously thereafter, trailing off into art and sentimentality—who doesn't remember the Steichen photograph of a misty, soft-edged Flatiron Building, with the silhouetted horse cab and plug-hatted cabbie in the foreground? Horsepresence took another hit last month, when the ancient Claremont Riding Academy, on West Eighty-ninth Street, closed its doors, reducing our equines to that redolent line of tourist-pullers on Central Park South. A few older city types (this writer among them) can remember cloppier times. The appearance of flower venders, with their brilliantly hued horse-drawn wagons of blooms, was once a certain sign that another city spring was at hand. Taken along to the theatre by your parents, and in among the dressed-up, perfumed, and excited hordes in the West Forties before curtain time, you were watched over by godlike city mounties, unmoving atop their enormous steeds. (At school, ambivalently, you heard that these same Cossacks sometimes dealt less sweetly with political demonstrators in Union Square. Want to lift the embargo on Spain? Want to free the Scottsboro Boys? Bring along a handful of marbles to drop on the pavement: police horses *hate* marbles.)

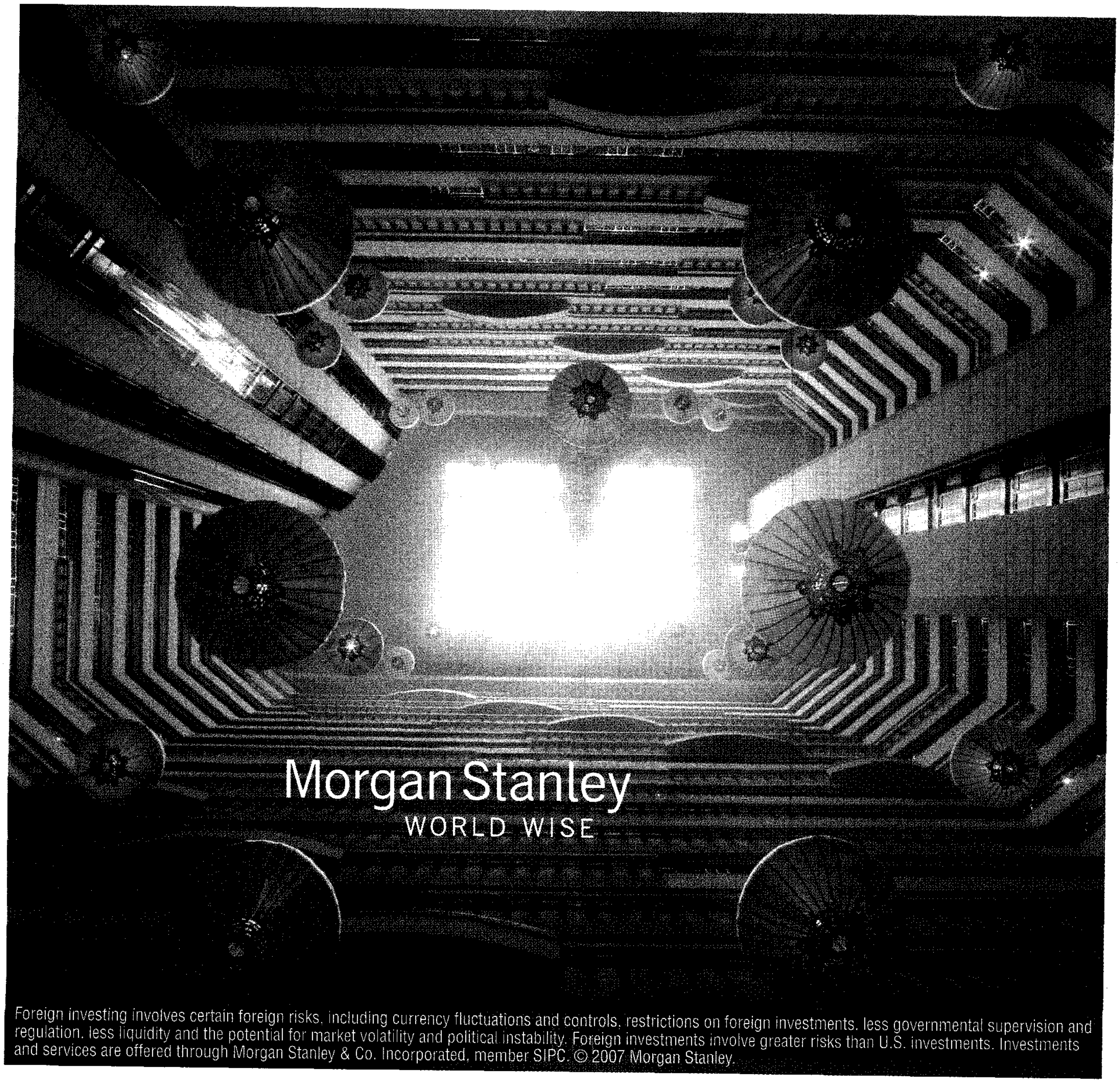
Back to the stage: When the musical "Annie Two" opened, in 1989, the dog playing Sandy several times missed a bark cue in the second act: a vital bit of business in the plot. Quizzed urgently by the director and producers, Sandy's handler said that the one thing that always made his thespian mutt bark was the sudden sight of a horse. At the next performance—and then at every performance thereafter—an assistant stage manager donned a full-sized horse head and stepped into sight in the wings on cue, producing the *arf*. Back to cops: When the mounted-police stable in the Squadron A Armory, on East Ninety-fourth Street, was closed, in 1966, a woman (it was my wife) alighting from a Madison Avenue bus at twilight was almost knocked flat by a riderless police horse, stirrups flying, which came wildly past her on its way home to its old barn. A minute later, a cab pulled up and an embarrassed policeman in jodhpurs got out, shaking his head, retrieved his animal, and trotted off toward their new stable, way across town.

Something's sad about horses, and not just Barbaro. Who ever expected that they would be not just less frequent on the Central Park bridle path but gone for good? I walk my dog, Harry, on the path every day, and now it turns out that the end of horseback riding in New York is my fault, along with global warming. The recent proliferation of dogs and joggers and baby strollers on the broad, stony old bridle path had led to the dwindling numbers of Claremont customers. Some days you never saw a horse at all. A week before the shut-down, Harry and I were close to the giant plane tree on the northeast bend near Ninety-seventh Street when a clockwise equestrienne came walking toward us on a gray horse. She wore jodhpurs, black boots, a black top, and a black helmet, set straight on her head. She sat up tall, her spine strong, her heels tilted back, her hands at rest with the reins, her crop held at an angle. She looked straight ahead. Everything exactly right.



Harry, a smooth fox terrier, watched the horse and horsewoman with his usual extreme interest, giving this horse the attention it deserved. Here it came, five yards away, picking up its stonelike, clomping feet. Huge black holes for nostrils, legs knobbed like furniture, ears aloft, and the curved, satiny, massive rear end lifting and putting down the great package with springy ease. The nearer eye, straight above us, took us in and rolled away. The smell of the great animal—nothing else is like it—arrived and then went by. I don't always know what my dog is thinking but this time I did: holy *shit!*

—Roger Angell



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THE FINANCIAL PAGE

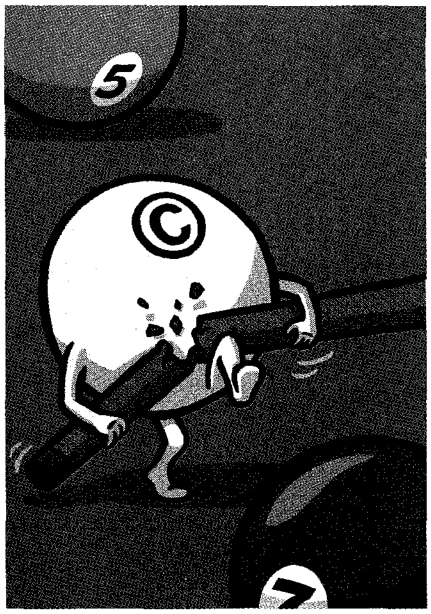
EXPORTING I.P.

Free trade is supposed to be a win-win situation. You sell me your televisions, I sell you my software, and we both prosper. In practice, free-trade agreements are messier than that. Since all industries crave foreign markets to expand into but fear foreign competitors encroaching on their home turf, they lobby their governments to tilt the rules in their favor. Usually, this involves manipulating tariffs and quotas. But, of late, a troubling twist in the game has become more common, as countries use free-trade agreements to rewrite the laws of their trading partners. And the country that is doing this most aggressively is the United States.

Our recent free-trade agreement with South Korea is a good example. Most of the deal is concerned with lowering tariffs, opening markets to competition, and the like, but an important chunk has nothing to do with free trade at all. Instead, it requires South Korea to rewrite its rules on intellectual property, or I.P.—the rules that deal with patents, copyright, and so on. South Korea will now have to adopt the U.S. and E.U. definition of copyright—extending it to seventy years after the death of the author. South Korea will also have to change its rules on patents, and may have to change its national-health-care policy of reimbursing patients only for certain drugs. All these changes will give current patent and copyright holders stronger protection for longer. Recent free-trade agreements with Peru and Colombia insisted on much the same terms. And CAFTA—a free-trade agreement with countries in Central America and the Caribbean—included not just longer copyright and trademark protection but also a dramatic revision in those countries' patent policies.

Why does the U.S. insist on these rules? Quite simply, American drug, software, and media companies are furious about the pirating of their products, and are eager to extend the monopolies that their patents and copyrights confer. These companies are the main advocates for such rules, and the big winners. The losers are often the citizens in developing countries, who find themselves subject to a Draconian I.P. regime that reduces access to new technologies.

Intellectual-property rules are clearly necessary to spur innovation: if every invention could be stolen, or every new drug immediately copied, few people would invest in innovation. But too much protection can strangle competition and can limit what economists call "incremental innovation"— innovations that build, in some way, on others. It also encourages companies to use patents as tools to keep competitors from entering new markets. Finally, it limits consumers' access to valuable new products: without patents, we wouldn't have many new drugs, but patents also drive prices of new drugs too high for many people in developing countries. The trick is to find the right balance, insuring that entrepreneurs and inventors get sufficient rewards while also maximizing the well-being of consumers.



History suggests that after a certain point tougher I.P. rules yield diminishing returns. Josh Lerner, a professor at Harvard Business School, looked at a hundred and fifty years of patenting, and found that strengthening patent laws had little effect on the number of innovations within a country. And, in the U.S., stronger patent protections for things like software have had little or no effect on the amount of innovation in the field. The benefits of stronger I.P. protection are even less convincing when it comes to copyright: there's little evidence that writers and artists are made more productive or creative by the prospect of earning profits for seventy years after they die, and the historical record suggests only a tenuous connection between stronger I.P. laws and creative output.

The U.S., in its negotiations, insists on a one-size-fits-all approach: stronger rules are better. But accepting a diverse range of I.P. rules makes more sense, especially in light of the different economic challenges that developing and developed countries face. Lerner's study found that the benefits of stronger patent laws were reduced in less developed countries. And developing countries, being poorer, obviously have more to gain from shorter patent terms for foreign innovations, since that facilitates the spread of new technology and the diffusion of ideas. Tellingly, this is the approach the U.S. takes when it comes to labor standards, arguing that we shouldn't impose developed-country standards on developing countries. But in the case of intellectual property the government's position is exactly the opposite. The only difference, it seems, is whose interests are at stake.

The great irony is that the U.S. economy in its early years was built in large part on a lax attitude toward intellectual-property rights and enforcement. As the historian Doron Ben-Atar shows in his book "Trade Secrets," the Founders believed that a strict attitude toward patents and copyright would limit domestic innovation and make it harder for the U.S. to expand its industrial base. American law did not protect the rights of foreign inventors or writers, and Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, in his famous "Report on Manufactures," of 1791, actively advocated the theft of technology and the luring of skilled workers from foreign countries. Among the beneficiaries of this was the American textile industry, which flourished thanks to pirated technology. Free-trade agreements that export our own restrictive I.P. laws may make the world safe for Pfizer, Microsoft, and Disney, but they don't deserve the name free trade.

—*James Surowiecki*

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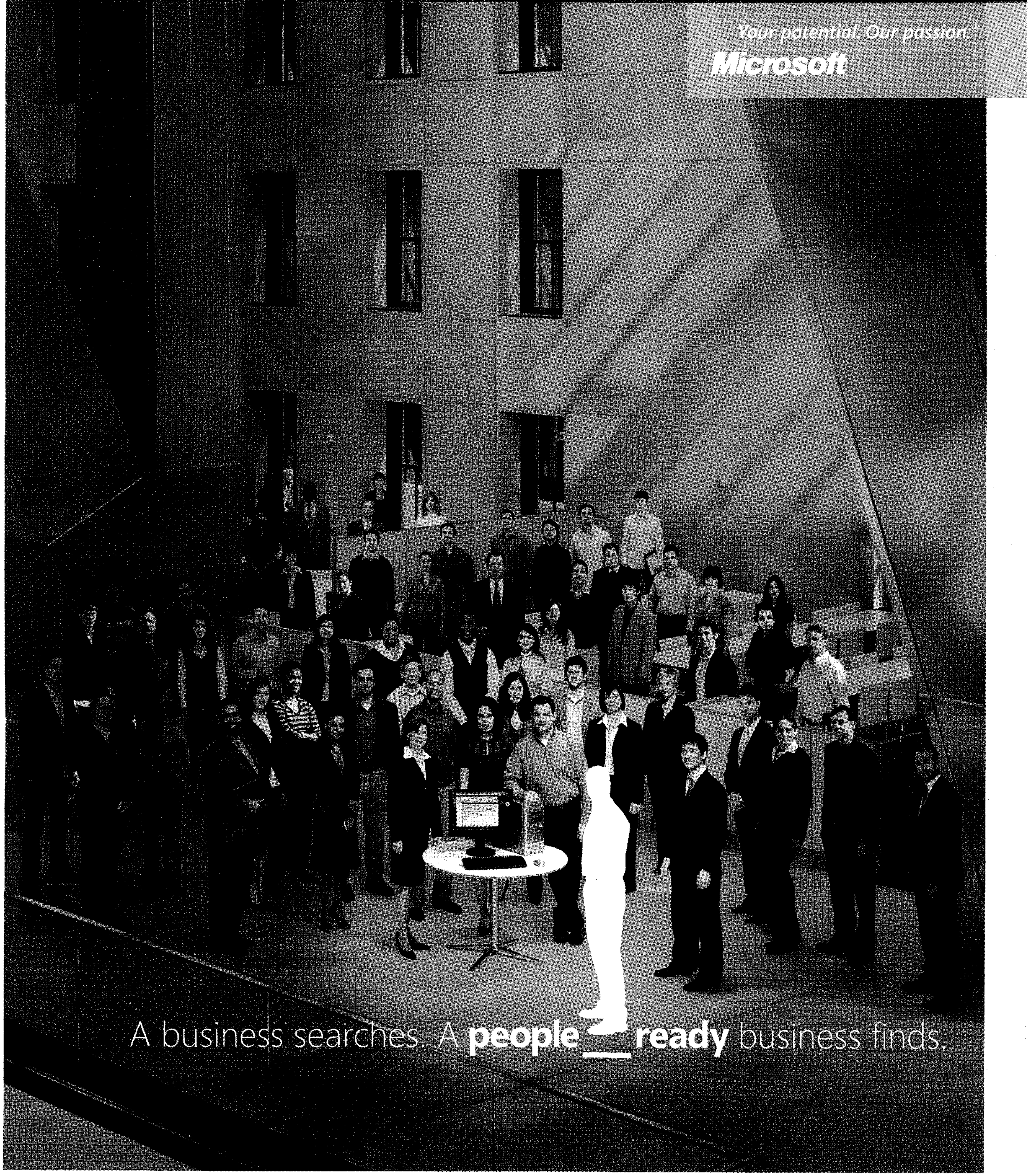
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DEPT. OF POPULAR CULTURE

BANKSY WAS HERE

The invisible man of graffiti art.

BY LAUREN COLLINS

The British graffiti artist Banksy likes pizza, though his preference in toppings cannot be definitively ascertained. He has a gold tooth. He has a silver tooth. He has a silver earring. He's an anarchist environmentalist who travels by chauffeured S.U.V. He was born in 1978, or 1974, in Bristol, England—no, Yate. The son of a butcher and a housewife, or a delivery driver and a hospital worker, he's fat, he's skinny, he's an introverted workhorse, he's a breeze-shooting exhibitionist given to drinking pint after pint of stout. For a while now, Banksy has lived in London: if not in Shoreditch, then in Hoxton. Joel Unangst, who had the nearly unprecedented experience of meeting Banksy last year, in Los Angeles, when the artist rented a warehouse from him for an exhibition, can confirm that Banksy often dresses in a T-shirt, shorts, and sneakers. When Unangst is asked what adorns the T-shirts, he will allow, before fretting that he has revealed too much already, that they are covered with smudges of white paint.

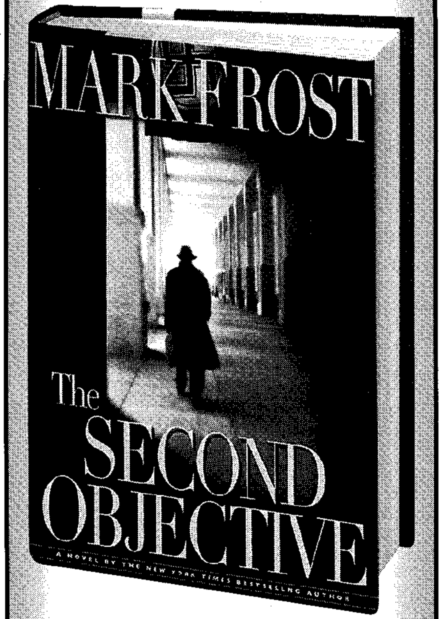
The creative fields have long had their shadowy practitioners, figures whose identities, whether because of scandalous content (the author of "Story of O"), fear of ostracism (Joe Klein), aversion to nepotism (Stephen King's son Joe Hill), or conceptual necessity (Sacha Baron Cohen), remain, at least for a time, unknown. Anonymity enables its adopter to seek fame while shielding him from the meaner consequences of fame-seeking. In exchange for ceding credit, he is freed from the obligations of authorship. Banksy, for instance, does not attend his own openings. He may miss out on the accolades, but he'll never spend a Thursday evening, from six to eight, picking at cubes of cheese.

Banksy is a household name in England—the *Evening Standard* has mentioned him thirty-eight times in the past six months—but his identity is a subject of febrile speculation. This much is certain: around 1993, his graffiti began appearing on trains and walls around Bristol; by 2001, his blocky spray-painted signature had cropped up all over the United Kingdom, eliciting both civic hand-wringing and comparisons to Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring. Vienna, San Francisco, Barcelona, and Paris followed, along with forays into pranksterism and more traditional painting, but Banksy has never shed the graffitist's habit of operating under a handle. His anonymity is said to be born of a desire—understandable enough for a "quality vandal," as he likes to be called—to elude the police. For years now, he has refused to do face-to-face interviews.

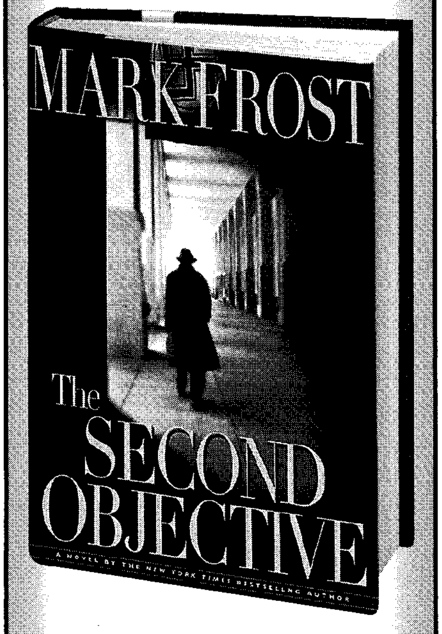
Having fashioned himself as a sort of painterly Publius, Banksy surfaces from time to time to prod the popular conscience. Confronted with a blank surface, he will cover it with scenes of anti-authoritarian whimsy: Winston Churchill with a Mohawk, two policemen kissing, a military helicopter crowned by a pink bow. Typically crafting his images with spray paint and cardboard stencils, Banksy is able to achieve a meticulous level of detail. His aesthetic is clean and instantly readable—broad social cartooning rendered with the graphic bang of an indie concert poster. Since street art is ephemeral, he occasionally issues books filled with photographs of his work, accompanied by his own text. He self-published his first three volumes, "Existencilism," "Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall," and "Cut It Out." His latest, "Wall and Piece," was published by Random House and has sold more than two hundred and fifty thousand copies.

As his renown has grown, Banksy has parlayed his knack for reducing ideas to simple visual elements into what a critic recently termed "red nose rebellion." He is both a lefty and a tweaker of lefty pieties. At a London antiwar dem-

FROM ACCLAIMED AUTHOR
MARK FROST



"Comparisons with *Day of the Jackal* are inevitable."
—*Publishers Weekly*



"Has bestseller written all over it."
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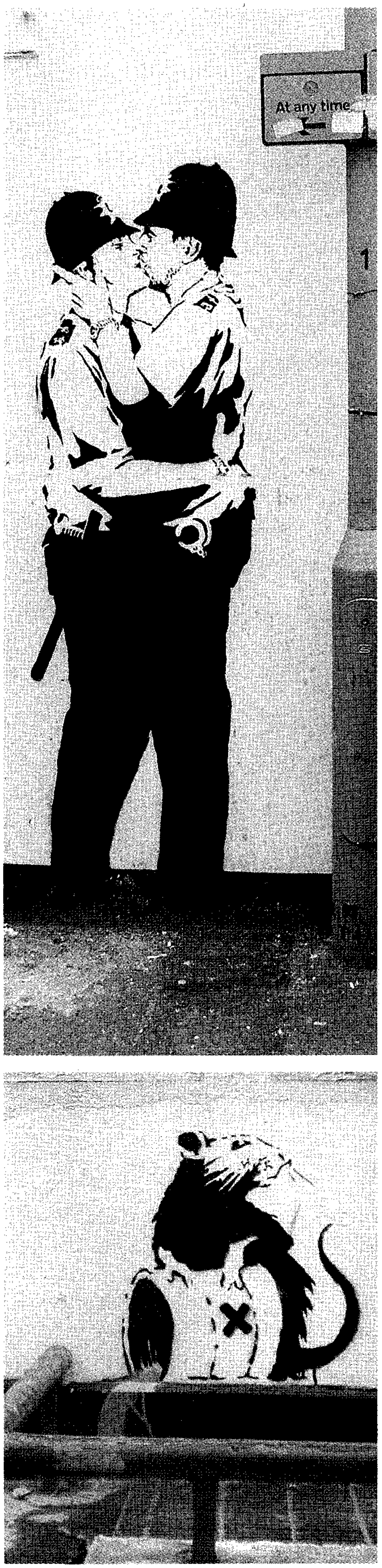


Seeing himself as a "quality vandal," Banksy operates in secret, but his scenes of anti-authoritarian whimsy have won him a colossal following.

COURTESY BANKSY (2005,2004)

onstration in 2003, he distributed signs that read "I Don't Believe In Anything. I'm Just Here for the Violence." Later, he produced revisionist oil paintings (Mona Lisa with a yellow smiley face, a pastoral landscape surrounded by crime-scene tape) and, disguised in a trench-coat and fake beard, installed them, respectively, in the Louvre and the Tate. For the Natural History Museum, it was *Banksus militus vandalus*, a taxidermy rat equipped with a miniature can of spray paint. In 2005, Banksy travelled to the West Bank, where he painted the security fence at Bethlehem with a trompe-l'oeil scene of a hole in the concrete barrier, revealing a glittering beach on the other side; it looked as if someone had dug through to paradise. Banksy sometimes satirizes even his own sanctimony. "I have no interest in ever coming out," he has said. "I figure there are enough self-opinionated assholes trying to get their ugly little faces in front of you as it is." Still, he posts news clips on his Web site, alongside video footage of successful stunts.

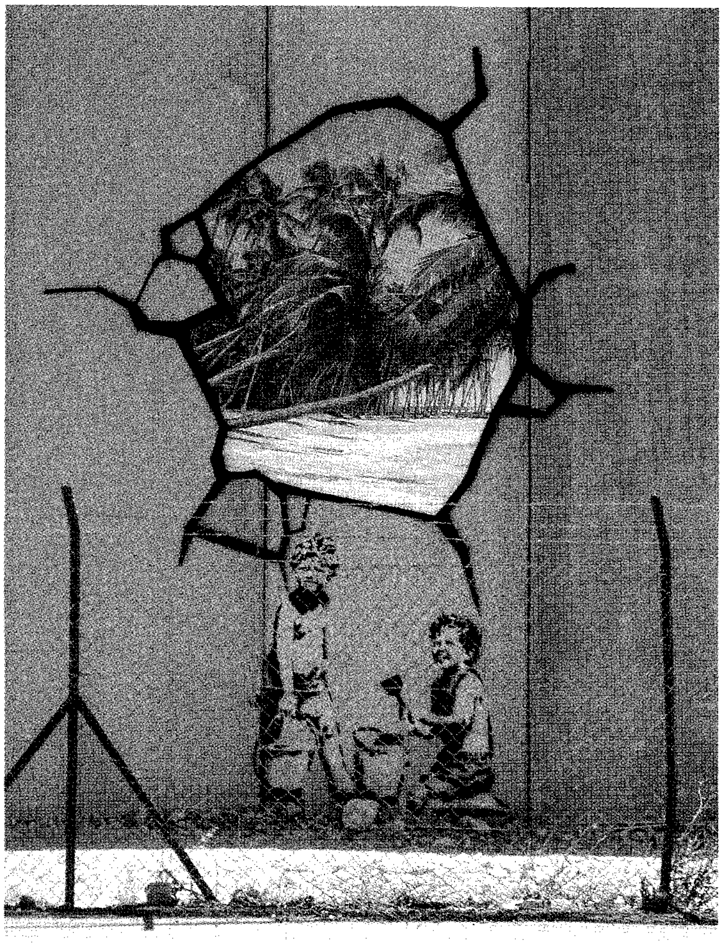
Whoever he is, Banksy revels in the incongruities of his persona. "The art world is the biggest joke going," he has said. "It's a rest home for the overprivileged, the pretentious, and the weak." Although he once declared that "every other type of art compared to graffiti is a step down," in recent years he has produced his share of traditional works on canvas and on paper, suitable for hanging indoors, above a couch. His gallerist in London, Steve Lazarides, maintains a warm relationship with Sotheby's, authenticating Banksy pieces that the house offers for auction, and thereby giving Banksy's tacit endorsement of their sale on the secondary market. In February, Sotheby's presented seven works by Banksy in a sale of contemporary art. "Bombing Middle England" (2001), an acrylic-and-spray-paint stencil on canvas, featuring a trio of retirees playing boules with live shells, was estimated to bring between sixty and a hundred thousand dollars. It sold for two hundred thousand. ("Bombing" is slang for writing graffiti.) Last month, a painting titled "Space Girl and Bird" sold at Bonham's for five hundred and seventy-five thousand, a Banksy record. Ralph Taylor, a specialist in the Sotheby's contemporary-art department, said of Banksy, "He is the quickest-growing artist anyone has ever seen of all time." Banksy responded to the Sotheby's sale by posting a painting on his Web site. It featured an auctioneer presiding over a crowd of rapt bidders, with the caption "I can't believe you morons actually buy this shit."

Such antagonism goads people, as it is designed to. For a while, the Wikipedia entry for Banksy began, "Banksy is a nancy boy. Banksy is a rip-off. Banksy is a bloody sod." Diane Shakespeare, an official with the Keep Britain Tidy campaign, told me, "We are concerned that Banksy's street art glorifies what is essentially vandalism," while Jonathan Jones, of the *Guardian*, recently wrote on his blog, "I think there's some wit in Banksy's work, some cleverness—and a massive bucket of hot steaming hype." But for every litter freak or culture purist driven to indignation by Banksy there's a person who is entranced. While setting up the show in Los Angeles, Banksy ordered a pizza, ate it, and tossed the box in a Dumpster. Within weeks, the pizza box was sold on eBay, for a hundred and two dollars. The seller suggested that a few anchovies that had been left inside might yield traces of Banksy's DNA.

Banksy's first formal exhibition was in 2000, at a Bristol restaurant whose owners he knew. Soon enough, he had established a comer's reputation among cool kids and tabloid editors, but it was not until three years later, with an event called "Turf War," that he attracted the attention of the London art world. A Barnumesque spectacle, staged at a secret location, it included live pigs and a heifer spray-painted with Andy Warhol's likeness. Queen Elizabeth II, who had just celebrated her Golden Jubilee, was depicted in a portrait as a chimp.

For his next show, "Crude Oils," Banksy stocked a Notting Hill gallery with two hundred free-roaming rats. Rodents are a favorite motif. "Like most people, I have a fantasy that all the little powerless losers will gang up together," Banksy wrote in "Existencilism." "That all the vermin will get some good equipment and then the underground will go overground and tear this city apart." His most famous street paintings are a series of black-and-white stencilled rats, the majority of them slightly larger than life-size. Each is different, but they all possess an impish poignancy that made them an immediate hit with London pedestrians. One, a "gangster rat," painted on a wall near the Smithfield market, wears a peace-sign medallion and carries a sign that says "Welcome to Hell." Another pleads, "Please love me." Cheyenne Westphal, the chairman for contemporary art in Europe at Sotheby's, told me, "My first experience with him was in October, 2004, when he left a piece outside a party we were throwing for Damien Hirst." It was a rat, holding up a placard that read, "You lie." Banksy, typically, was flipping off the art world and begging it to notice him at the same time.

Pleasing crowds, not cognoscenti, however, remains his stated aim. "The last time I did a show," he said, before the Los Angeles opening last September, "I thought I'd got a four-star review, then I realized they said, 'This is absolute ***.'" He elaborated: "Hollywood is a town where they honor their heroes by writing their names on the pavement to be walked on by fat people and peed on by dogs. It seemed like a great place to come and be ambitious."



A Banksy trompe-l'oeil painting on a security fence in the West Bank.

COURTESY BANKSY (2005)

Banksy and his confederates (a team of "fun-loving Englishmen," Joel Unangst said) work flexible and light. Their m.o. is stealth: drop in on a city, perform reconnaissance, erect—in the style of a World's Fair—a temporary gallery, and, almost before anyone knows they've been there, break it all down and get the hell out. Unangst recalled, "Some people I work with called me up and said, 'Can they come and look at your warehouse?' We set up a meeting in the middle of the night. Banksy rolls up in an S.U.V. and looks around. He asked me if I had any problems with him bringing in a live elephant, and I said, 'No, it's cool.'" Unangst was instructed to refer to Banksy by an alias, which he refused to divulge, except to say that it was "a regular male name."

In February, Unangst showed me around the warehouse, a twelve-thousand-square-foot former fruit-and-vegetable depot. "This is where it all happened," he said. "I thought it was going to be a quaint little art show."

Friday, September 15th, was the first day of the exhibition, titled "Barely Legal." Its location was not announced until that morning; the warehouse, situated downtown, off I-10, is not easy to find. Still, Keanu Reeves and Jude Law had shown up at a V.I.P. preview the evening before, as had Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, who bought several pieces. "These days, everyone is trying to be famous, but he has anonymity," Pitt told reporters. "I think that's great." The irony may have been lost on Pitt that one of Banksy's publicists had invited him.

By Saturday, Los Angeles's many animal-rights activists were registering their displeasure. Banksy was displaying an eight-thousand-pound elephant named Tai, whose hide he had painted red and embellished with gold fleurs-de-lis, to match the wallpaper of a parlor he had constructed. (The elephant in the room, a handout proclaimed, was global poverty.) The activists said that the paint was toxic. Ed Boks, Los Angeles's general manager of animal services, said he regretted that his office had issued a permit and, after visiting the show, wrote on his blog that looking into the elephant's eyes "nearly brought me to tears." He eventually ordered the animal hosed down. The L.A. *Times*, which had not planned to review the show, published two stories. Al Jazeera reported on the controversy. Other people were angry about a large portrait of Mother Teresa overlaid with the words "I learnt a valuable lesson from this woman. Moisturise everyday." By Sunday, thirty thousand people, waiting in lines five blocks long, had seen the exhibition.

I asked Unangst what more he could tell me about Banksy, and he replied, "The only thing I can say is he's like everybody, but he's like nobody." And so began the koan of Banksy, whose own talents as an aphorist—"Never paint graffiti in a town where they still point at aeroplanes"; "Only when the last tree has been cut down and the last river has dried up will man realize that reciting red Indian proverbs makes you sound like a fucking muppet"—seem to inspire all who cross his path. Banksy has convinced nearly everyone who has ever met him that promulgating his image would amount to an unconscionable act of soul robbery.

"Banksy is a genius and a madman," Unangst continued.

"He's a guy from Bristol," someone who knows him told me later.

"I'm not obliged to say more than I'm obliged to," another loyalist said.

Cheyenne Westphal was in Los Angeles during "Barely Legal," attending a dinner for the photographer Wolfgang Tillmans. "Everyone there was saying,

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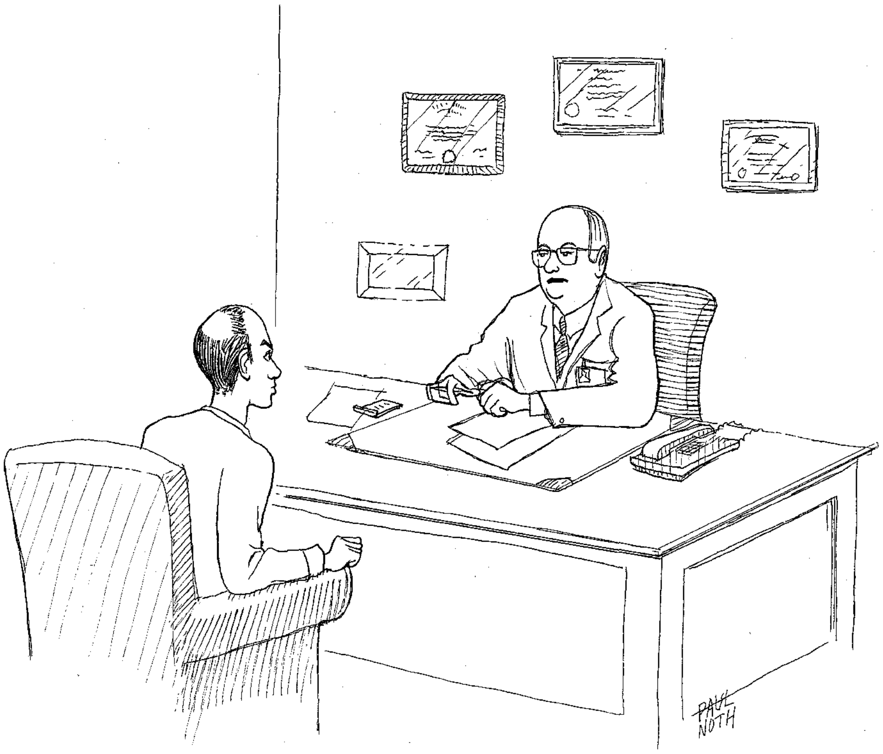


"I'm a doctor—I can add 'ectomy' to any word I choose."

• •

'Who is this Banksy?'" she recalled. During his time in California, Banksy did not meet with any potential patrons, but he managed to "get up," in the argot, a few works of art for the enjoyment of all Angelenos. Along with graffitiing several local buildings, he bought a blowup doll and dressed it in a hood and an orange jumpsuit, as a Guantánamo prisoner. Then he sneaked into Disneyland and installed it along the path of the Big Thunder Mountain Railroad ride, where it remained for ninety minutes. A week earlier, he had created five hundred doctored copies of Paris Hilton's début CD and distributed them in record stores all over the U.K. Hilton appeared topless on the cover, and her song titles included "Why Am I Famous?" and "What Am I For?"

Unangst wandered behind the warehouse, toward what looked like a rusted-out paddy wagon. It was parked against a wall. Banksy had tagged the side that was obscured with a pixillated Dorothy, from "The Wizard of Oz," a noose in her outstretched hand. I wrote down a phone number from a painted decal—"How's My Bombing?"—on the truck's bumper, hoping that it might offer a hint about the Banksy mystery. It connected to a Navy recruiting station in Arizona.

Even on Banksy's home turf, it's hard to know what to look for, or where to look. For many of his admirers, that's the fun of it: scouring a city for him, or his art works, invests a potentially monotonous activity with the possibility of discovery. When I arrived in London, in March, my only clue to who Banksy might be was a series of pictures, posted on the Internet in 2004, by a Jamaican photographer named Peter Dean Rickards. That year, so the story goes, Banksy flew to Kingston to work on a project. He visited the reggae singer Buju Banton, at his studio, and Rickards documented the occasion. Eventually, he became disgruntled. "Banksy swanned around Jamaica as if he owned the place," he told the *Evening Standard*, to which he sold the images. "He's too much of a pussy to protest having his picture taken once he found himself in Kingston, Jamaica—nowhere near the nice, safe media offices . . . that he's accustomed to," he wrote on his Web site, in a rant that accompanied the pictures, which have since been removed. Steve Lazarides confirmed to the *Standard* that Banksy had been in Jamaica, but said that Rickards had the wrong guy. When I contacted Rickards, he said that he wasn't at liberty to discuss the incident. "The best I can do is to tell you," he wrote in an e-mail, "that they don't call him BANKsy for nothing."

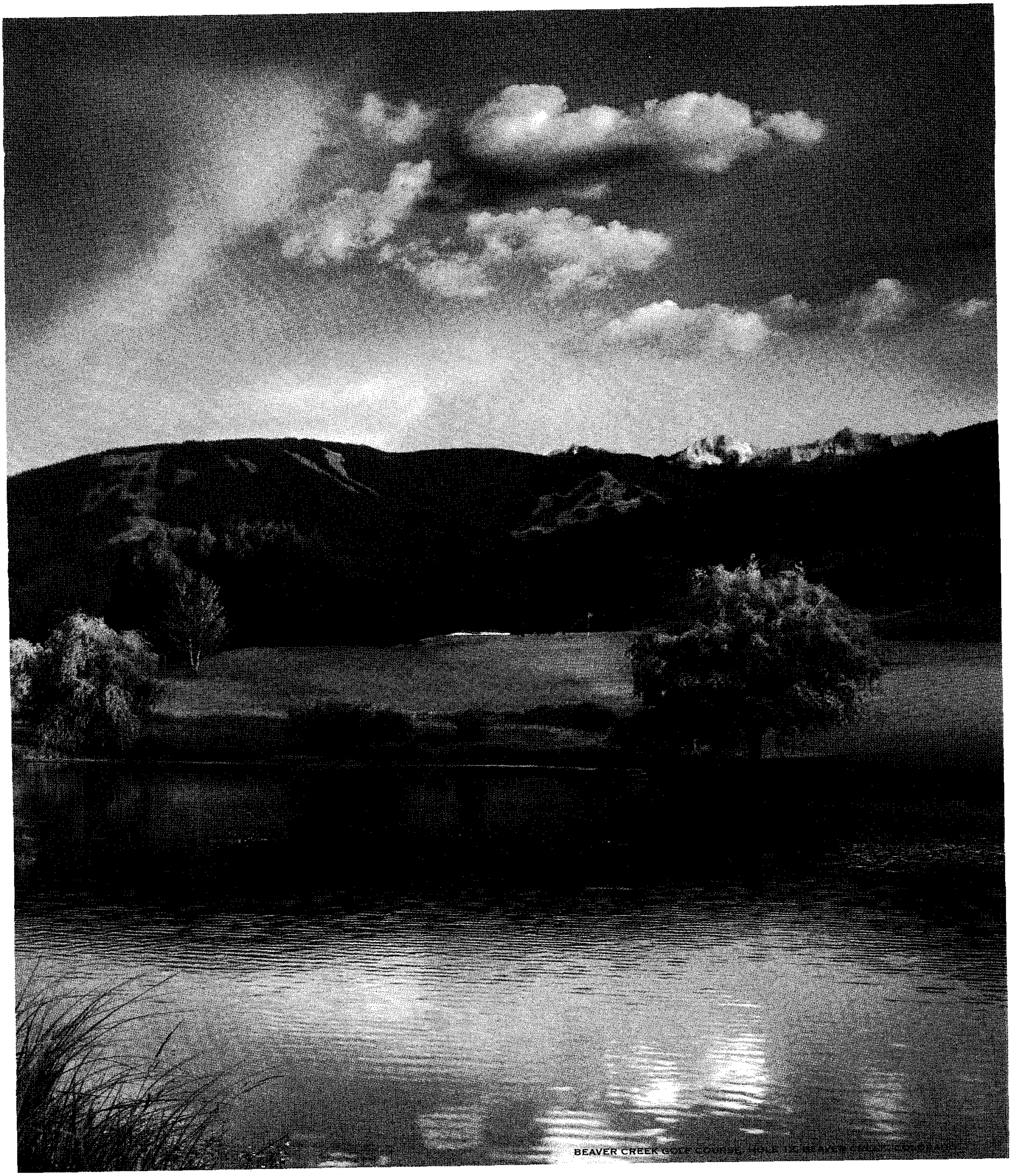
Buju Banton, reached on the telephone, did not dispel the notion that the man in the pictures was Banksy. "Rickards tried to ruin something that has a mystique, and that isn't cool," he said. "Banksy's an artist that not everyone should have a piece of," he added, and then started laughing.

Colin Saysell, an anti-graffiti officer in Bristol, who has been tracking Banksy for years, concluded that the photos were legit. So did Simon Hattenstone, a writer at the *Guardian*, who met Banksy, or at least a Banksy decoy, in 2003, before Banksy swore off the press. I showed him a makeshift lineup of supposed Banksy photographs—there have been several others—and he gravitated toward the Rickards shot. "That picture is definitely Banksy," he said. Elizabeth Wolff, who is now a reporter at the *Post*, was with Hattenstone, as a summer intern, for the Banksy encounter, which took place over pints of Guinness in a Shoreditch pub. She, too, said the Rickards picture was "definitely" Banksy. "He was the grimiest person I'd ever met," she said. "He looked like someone from one of those British industrial towns from the nineteenth century. There was a layer of grit on him."

Steve Lazarides's gallery is housed in a former sex shop on the ground floor of a four-story brick building in Soho, in London. Lazarides, like Banksy, grew up in Bristol. His mother was a housewife; his father sold kebabs. Lazarides and Banksy did not know each other as kids, but friends introduced them when they were in their twenties, and Lazarides began taking pictures of Banksy's graffiti. (Lazarides was a professional photographer for a time, having also worked mixing concrete and plucking chickens.) He gained Banksy's confidence and began serving as his fixer, gatekeeper, and, eventually, agent. As their fortunes rose, Lazarides was able, in 2005, to establish his business.

The gallery's motto is "Art by People," but its affiliates exhibit a caginess toward anyone outside their circle of trusted ac-

Five IRON OR FLY ROD?



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complices, many of whom work in semi-symbiosis. Banksy, for instance, illustrated the cover for "Think Tank," a 2003 album by the band Blur, of which Damon Albarn is a member. (Banksy later declared that he'd never do commercial work again.) Albarn went on to found Gorillaz, a band whose public face is represented by four animated characters. Remi Kabaka, who provides the voice for the band's drummer, works at the gallery as a sort of majordomo. At a recent party at a bar nearby, his name was the password for entry.

On a Friday morning, a crowd had gathered on the sidewalk in front of the gallery, an increasingly common problem for Lazarides. "The hookers get really upset if you block their doorway," a neighbor told me, pointing upstairs. The gallery was supposed to open at noon, but the doors were locked.

Peregrine Hill and Dan Mitchell, partners in a London law firm, were among those on the sidewalk. Worried that the show would sell out before they got there, they had cut out of work. They were dressed in suits and ties and had come armed with a P.D.A. and a computer printout.

The night before, Lazarides had thrown an opening party for Faile, a graffiti collective from Brooklyn. "They're probably all hung over," Mitchell said of Lazarides and his crew.

"We need to get ourselves invited to the previews," Hill replied.

Eventually, a young man with lime-green high-tops and messy hair came bounding down the street, rolling a cigarette. He was not, it turned out, a Lazarides acolyte but another anxious collector.

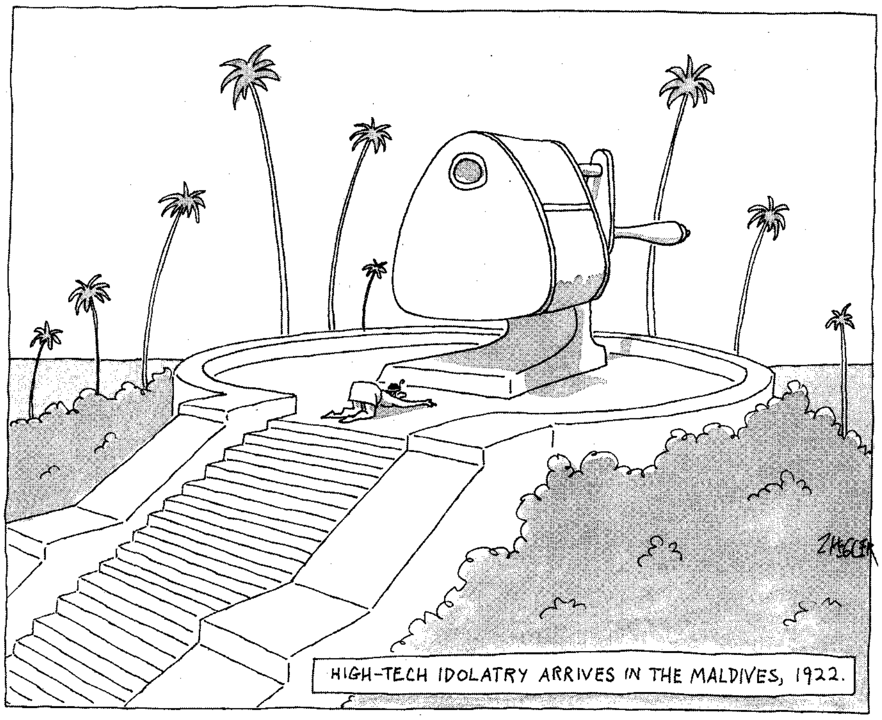
"Pictures on Walls got sold out of Nick Walker prints," he said, striking up a conversation with the lawyers. (Nick Walker is another graffiti artist from Bristol. Pictures on Walls is the Web site through which Banksy sells, and invariably sells out, his limited-edition prints, which go for under fifteen hundred dollars apiece. "When we sell prints at below their true market value that is done at the artist's request, not because we're stupid," the Web site reads.)

"That was rubbish!" Hill answered. He then asked, in the manner of a Beanie Babies enthusiast, "Did you get one?"

"I missed it. Dickhead!"

The next to arrive was Caitlin Stapleton, on spring break from Northeastern University. "Me and my sister are here visiting, and I'm obsessed with Banksy," she said. "I'm like, I'm going to go on an actual trip and *find* things by him."

A woman arrived, unlocked the door to the gallery, and disappeared inside, without acknowledging the crowd.



HIGH-TECH IDOLATRY ARRIVES IN THE MALDIVES, 1922.

"Even if I just found one of his little rats, it'd be awesome," Stapleton said.

Eventually, an assistant named Sam materialized and began rehashing the previous night's events. "It was insane," he said. "People were fighting—'I want this, I want that.'"

I was supposed to have a meeting with one of Lazarides's deputies. He didn't show. Eventually, Lazarides called in. I'd heard that he kept a secret office nearby. Someone handed me a cordless phone. "We let the art speak for itself," Lazarides said, gruffly. "I don't want to be Banksy's spokesman."

"All these little lads look at Banksy the way the youngsters who are into football look at Beckham—he's their hero," Denise James, the director of an organization called Bristol Clean & Green, said recently, sitting in a café on the top floor of a Bristol motorcycle dealership. Clean & Green is charged with cleaning up graffiti blight, which costs the city more than three hundred thousand dollars each year. "It annoys me, it frustrates me, because it's just so ugly," James said.

The graffitist's impulse is akin to a blogger's: write some stuff, quickly, which people may or may not read. Both mediums demand wit and nimbleness. They arouse many of the same fears about the lowering of the public discourse and the taking of undeserved liberties. Graffiti aficionados like to say that the form is as ancient as cave drawing, and Banksy takes a similarly romantic view. "Imagine a city where graffiti wasn't illegal, a city where everybody could draw wherever they liked," he once wrote. "Where the street was awash with a million colors and little phrases. . . . A city that felt like a party where everyone was invited, not just the estate agents and barons of big business." Detractors of graffiti, however, can trace its spread as assiduously as epidemiologists mapping an outbreak of diphtheria. Colin Saysell, the anti-graffiti officer, explained that graffiti had first appeared in the U.K. around the same time as the Rock Steady Crew, the Bronx hip-hop group, in 1983. "They went on a European tour and brought with them a number of very famous graf writers from New York as a fringe act," Saysell said. At the end of the eighties, he said, there was a crackdown, which succeeded in squelching local graffiti culture for a

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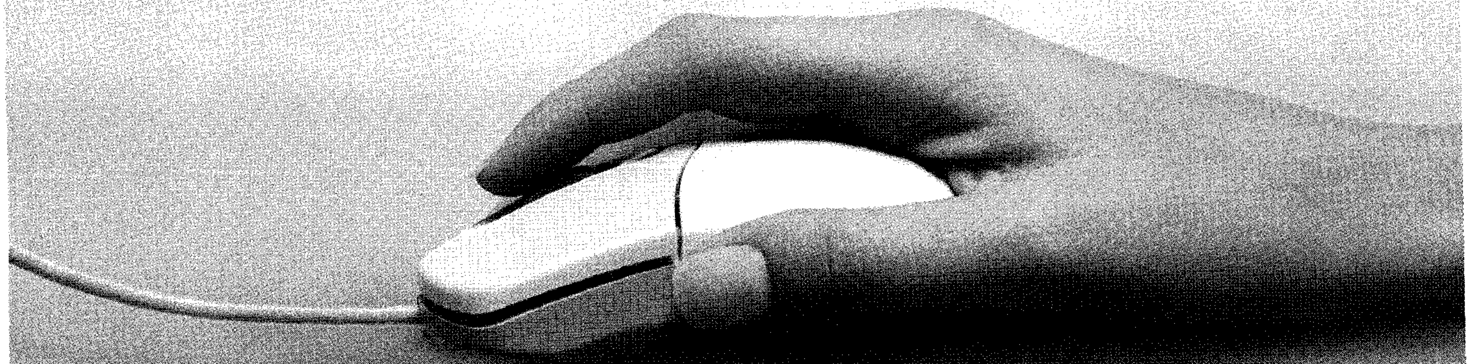

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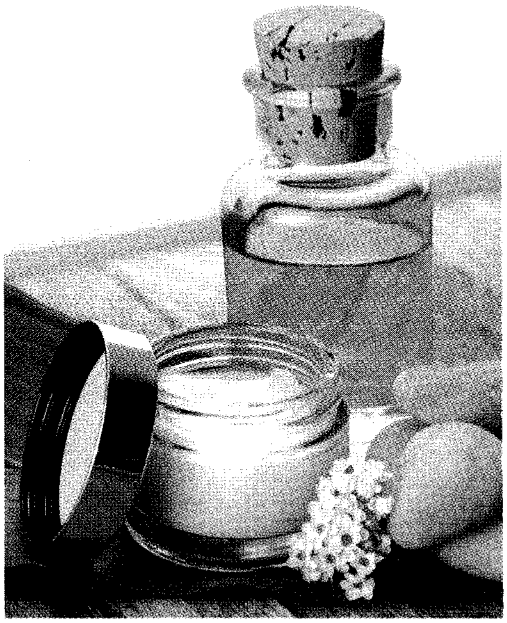

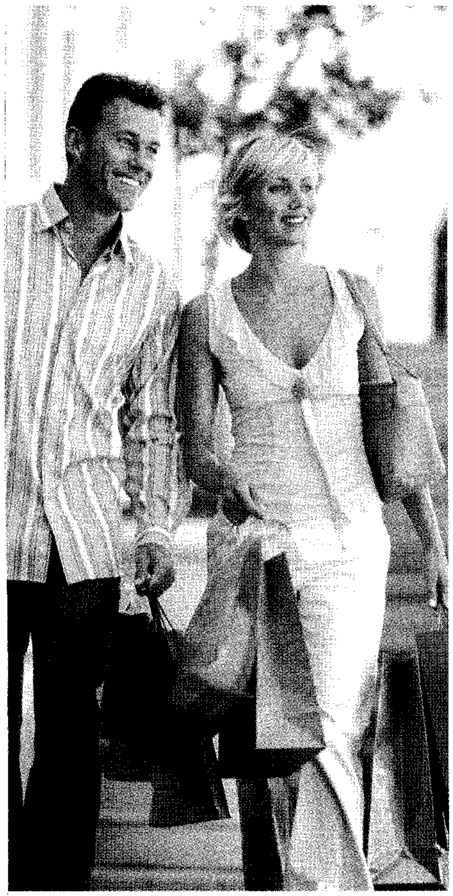

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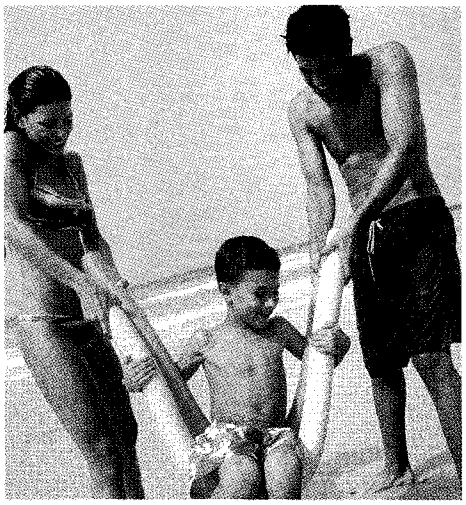

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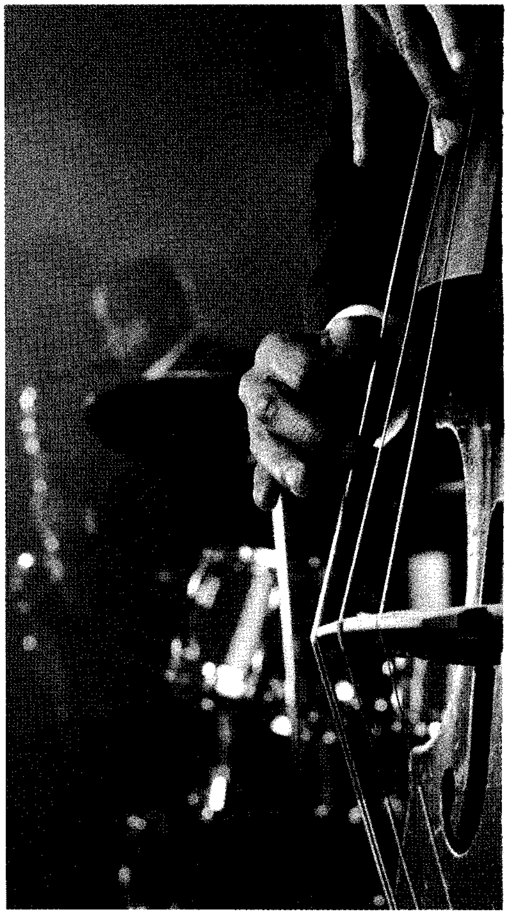

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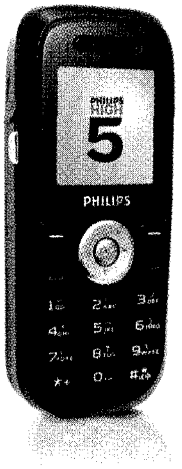

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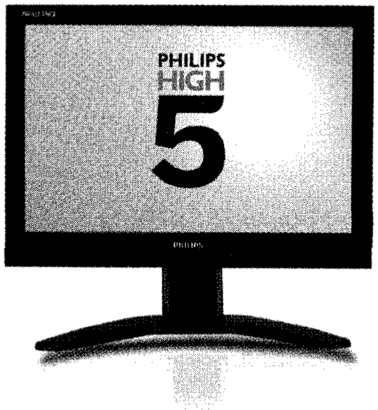

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moment. "Since 2003, it's been going crazy again."

If Bristol is, as James told me, "the graffiti capital of England," then Banksy is its patron sinner. One morning last June, citizens were surprised to find a new mural downtown, on the side of a sexual-health clinic. It depicted a window, a perfect imitation of others nearby. From the sill, a naked man dangled by his fingertips. Inside, a fully dressed man scanned the horizon, next to a woman in dishabille. Directly facing the fake window are the offices of the Bristol city council, which, in a departure from policy, decided to put the mural's fate to a public vote. Of about a thousand respondents, ninety-three per cent said the mural should stay. So it did. (In late April, however, London authorities whitewashed Banksy's famous "Pulp Fiction" mural, which showed John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson holding bananas instead of handguns.) "Banksy's latest work of art is superb," a man wrote to the local paper. "If the council wants to do something it should cut down that dreadful shrub which is obscuring the piece." Gary Hopkins, a councilman, told me, "I think we undermined his street cred by making him mainstream." Even James admitted to a grudging affection for Banksy. "I like the one where he's got a picture of a stream and a bridge and he's just dumped a shopping trolley in there," she said, referring to a painting that Banksy did in the style of Monet. "I can relate to that, because we've got a problem with shopping trolleys."

Municipal lawmakers are not the only Bristolians to have taken a faddish interest in Banksy: in a run-down part of town called Easton, where Banksy is rumored to have lived in the nineties, a couple named Sarah and David Anslow were trying, on behalf of an "anonymous party," to sell one of his early murals. The mural, which is spray-painted freehand, with bubble letters and looping "wild-style" arrows, and bears less resemblance to Banksy's recent work than to something you might see on a PATH train, adorns an exterior wall of a crumbling Victorian terrace house. For a minimum bid of four hundred thousand dollars, a buyer would receive the mural—with the house thrown in "for free." The Anslows, who have an art gallery in Devon called the Red Propeller, announced the offer just after the February Sotheby's auction.

When I met Sarah Anslow at the house this spring, she began by making a confession. She and David were the actual owners of the house. They had bought it and several others in the neighborhood in the early nineties, as investments. She said that they had decided to come out as the owners only after a local reporter called them on the charade. "We had been concerned that it could get reported in the wrong way," she said. "'Greedy Owners Try to Cash In on Banksy Mural.'" Anslow talked about her and David's passion for street art. "We want to get hold of Banksy," she said. As she detailed their dreams of becoming the Medici of graffiti, it was easier to see why Banksy makes himself scarce.

A white station wagon pulled up. Its driver, in an orange trucker hat, rolled down a window and regarded us warily. When he asked who we were, Anslow did not identify herself as the owner. The man introduced himself as Ben Bloodworth, and wondered if we knew that, a few days earlier, a city contractor had tried to destroy the mural.

"The guy said, 'If you can get a group of more than twenty people to come down, then maybe that'll be enough to stop me,'" Bloodworth told us. Twenty people, at least, had shown up, as had news cameras. It was Bloodworth's opinion that the incident was part of a publicity ploy by the sellers. (Two weeks ago, the mural was defaced with a bucket of red paint.)

"The house is fucked. It's completely shabby. That's why they can't sell it." He launched into an impersonation of the putative landlord: "'It's this really lovely three-bedroom shithole in Easton, but it's got a masterpiece painted on the side.'" Bloodworth said that he had been interviewed on the BBC about the showdown. Banksy, watching, had phoned a neighborhood friend and got him to put Bloodworth on the phone. "He said, 'It all came across very well. I owe you a pint.'" I showed Bloodworth the Rickards picture and asked him if its subject looked familiar. "Naw, that guy looks like De Niro," he said, with a shake of his head.

A few weeks earlier, Anslow had attempted to reach Banksy through his

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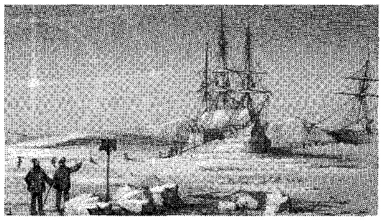

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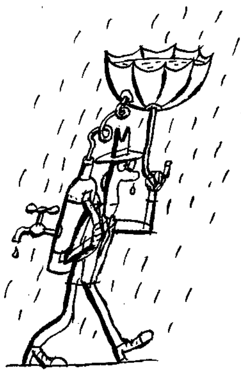
Web site. Someone named Dean had responded with an e-mail: "Mr. Banks is away polishing one of his yachts."

"Fings have gone a little bit nuts lately," Steve Lazarides said, with the burry inflection of his native city. "Suddenly, it's become all right amongst the proper art world to collect street art."



It was April, and Lazarides had agreed to meet me at the gallery, where he would be setting up an exhibition by a thirty-six-year-old sculptor named Mark Jenkins, who makes anthropomorphic figures from packing tape. I arrived at the gallery first. Hip-hop was blasting from the speakers; an empty Red Bull can had been tossed on the floor. After a few minutes, a slight man with a shaved head burst through the door. He was wearing jeans and carrying a camera. It was Lazarides—he'd been around the corner snapping pictures of a tape sculpture that Jenkins had planted on the sidewalk. Lazarides seemed elated. "It's a proper piece of street art!" he yelled.

Lazarides talked to an assistant for a few minutes about preparations for the evening, and then swept out the door and around the corner, into a bookstore. He bounded up a few flights of stairs: the secret office. It was furnished with stained leather gym mats and loads of art. There were fake Picassos signed by Damien Hirst, packing-tape babies, a Banksy canvas of a monkey wielding a gun. Near a window was a vending machine stocked with prosthetic limbs. "I get all the crazy shit, basically," Lazarides said.

After a few minutes, he scooted out of the building and into the vestibule of another, where he rang a buzzer. A hostess opened the door. It was a private club, where we were to eat lunch. After ordering lamb chops and a glass of white wine—"whichever"—Lazarides talked about his path to art-world dominion. "It wasn't open to us, so we just decided to open up a different branch of art," he said. "It's a bit like being a d.j.—you're in the club and they're playing nothing you like. All of a sudden, you have to put on your own club night." He went on, "To be honest, I have no idea how I got made the designated gallery owner, out of everybody."

Across town, meanwhile, amid the fashionable shops of Knightsbridge, a show titled "Banksy" had been mounted by a gallerist named Acoris Andipa, a descendant of what he says is civilization's oldest art-dealing clan. "The Andipa family was first recognized in 1593 in Venice, although our history actually goes back much further, to the time of the Bible," he told me when I visited.

Sitting at his desk, dressed in a pin-striped suit, Andipa acknowledged that this was an unusual show for him. "Being urban art, I thought it was a little too far away, but I decided to test it on the back of a Damien Hirst exhibit we did," he said. "Four out of five Banksys were snapped up in the first hour. That then satisfied me artistically, and then, frankly, we went to a twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week focus on putting together a major collection that would be worthy of making a big noise about." Cheyenne Westphal, from Sotheby's, confirmed that the market for Banksy has exploded over the past year. "I feel in many ways that we are only at the beginning," she said. Michael Fischer, a hedge-fund manager who collects Banksy, put it this way: "He's gone from zero to a hundred in, like, three seconds."

Andipa does not represent any artists, so all his shows are privately sourced. "At first, we had Banksy followers, if you like, telling us it would be impossible," he said. He had called Lazarides, but the conversation "lasted a minute." I asked him if he thought Lazarides was unprofessional. "Let's just say we have picked up a lot of clients with the way *we* do business," he said.

For his show, Andipa had instituted a no-street-art policy—although he saw some "cracking good pieces," he said, "street art must remain on the street"—but he managed to acquire fifteen signed canvases and more than thirty signed limited-edition prints. Having previewed the show in Gstaad, he had now, a week after its opening, sold nearly half of the pieces, which he was offering at prices ranging from ten thousand to two hundred thousand dollars. Twirling a pen, he reported that walk-in traffic at the gallery had increased fifteenfold. "We've had a lot of youth, and we're not talking about well-heeled youth," he said. "A lot of street kids, the kids who sort of hang around and hang out and what have you. They're all very polite." Andipa said that he would love to know what Banksy thought of his efforts. "In theory, he's anti-art establishment, and here I am in this Knightsbridge art gallery, but I would also like to think, deep down, that he would be proud to think of his work being surrounded by Picassos."

Banksy is so intimately tied to Lazarides's success, and Lazarides to his, that, of people who care about these things, more than one has speculated that Lazarides *is* Banksy. This seems unlikely: fielding, or refusing to field, all the world's questions about Banksy is occupation enough for one man. Still, Lazarides is in deep. When I asked him, over lunch, about a statement he'd once made, denying that he and Banksy meet in person for the delivery of art works—"I get a phone call and go pick 'em up, back of a supermarket"—he admitted it wasn't quite true. It is that kind of stagemanship that led a British observer to describe him to me as "exactly like Malcolm McLaren." (Lazarides is no rube: type "Banksy" into Google and ads for Laz Inc. come up.)

Whatever guile Lazarides possesses is offset, however, by a winning ingenuousness. He was not happy about the Banksy exhibition at Andipa. It was "piracy," he said. He mentioned that Andipa had tried to reach him. "He called me Stavros, and I called him a cock," he said, breaking into a grin. "Nothing I love more than failing aristocrats."

Lazarides's cell phone, which he had politely ignored for two hours, buzzed with a text message: "Bloke on Neal Street doing a roaring trade in fake Banksys."

That night, I went to the Jenkins opening at the Lazarides gallery. For the first hour, Lazarides and Jenkins hung back, drinking Tiger beers on the sidewalk across the street. When Lazarides finally ventured inside, he was approached by a serious-looking man in important glasses. "What drew you to Mark's work?" he asked.

"It's fuckin' funny, man."

During a phone conversation in March, Lazarides had insisted that

Banksy was "lying low" for at least a year. An edition of his "I Can't Believe You Morons Actually Buy This Shit" painting had been released on Pictures on Walls that month, crashing the Web site for five hours, but, aside from that, he had not been heard from.

One Friday at the end of April, when I checked my e-mail there was a message from Banksy.

"Hello there," it went. "Thanks for taking an interest in my stuff."

Banksy agreed to answer some questions over e-mail. He was wryly eloquent, but his banter seemed less playful than it has in the past. "I don't think art is much of a spectator sport these days," he began. "I don't know how the art world gets away with it, it's not like you hear songs on the radio that are just a mess of noise and then the d.j. says, 'If you read the thesis that comes with this, it would make more sense.'"

I'd heard that Banksy had become "increasingly paranoid," and I wondered whether the accusations of hypocrisy had worn on him, and whether he was able to enjoy his success. "I have been called a sellout, but I give away thousands of paintings for free, how many more do you want?" he wrote. "I think it was easier when I was the underdog, and I had a lot of practise at it. The money that my work fetches these days makes me a bit uncomfortable, but that's an easy problem to solve—you just stop whingeing and give it all away. I don't think it's possible to make art about world poverty and then trouser all the cash, that's an irony too far, even for me." He went on, "I love the way capitalism finds a place—even for its enemies. It's definitely boom time in the discontent industry. I mean, how many cakes does Michael Moore get through?"

"Why do you do what you do?" I asked.

Banksy replied, "I originally set out to try and save the world, but now I'm not sure I like it enough."

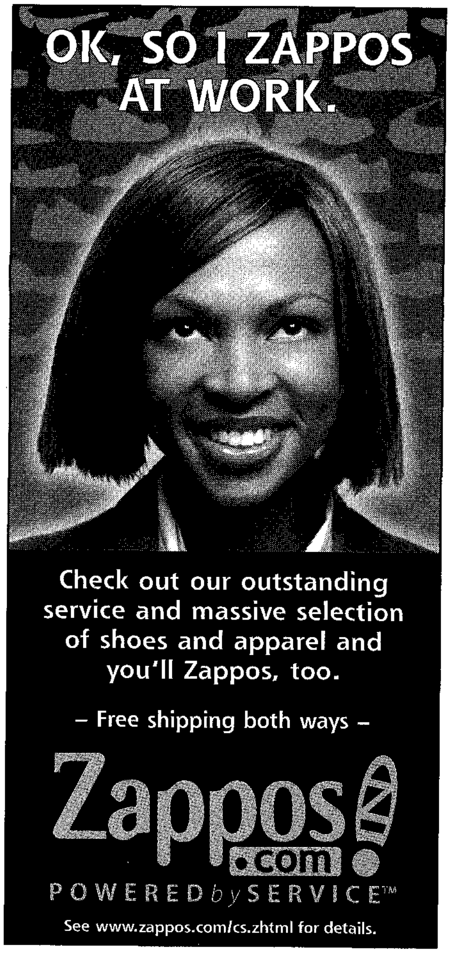
We discussed his mural in Bristol ("I think because it turned out there was a sexual-health clinic on the other side of the wall helped, which just goes to show—if you paint enough crap in enough places sooner or later one of them will mean something to someone") and the city council's decision to preserve it ("I think it's pretty incredible a city council is prepared to make value judgments about preserving illegally painted graffiti. I'm kind of proud of them").

Banksy has always had a fatalistic streak: in one of his books, a pair of lovebirds is juxtaposed with the dictum "As soon as you meet someone, you know the reason you will leave them." In another, a little girl releases a heart-shaped red balloon: "When the time comes to leave, just walk away quietly and don't make any fuss." Recently, the London *Times* art critic Waldemar Januszczak wrote that Banksy's "chief achievement, and I believe it to be a mammoth one, was finding a way to operate so successfully outside the art world," signalling, with the use of the past tense, that his era of underground credibility had come and gone. The game of anonymity must also have its limits, and its limitations. "What happens if you are found out?" I wrote.

For a cipher, Banksy was surprisingly direct: "Maintaining anonymity can be kind of crippling. I gave a painting to my favorite pub to settle a tab once, which they hung above the bar. So many people came in asking questions about it I haven't been back there for two years.

"In retrospect getting your work in the newspapers is a really dumb thing to do if what you do requires a certain level of anonymity. I was a bit slow there. Brad Pitt told a journalist 'I think it's really cool no one knows who he is' and within a week there were journalists from the *Daily Mail* at the door of my dealer's dad's chip shop asking if he knew where they could find me. All the attention meant I lost some of the element of surprise. A few days after the show in Los Angeles opened I was painting under a freeway downtown when a homeless guy ran over and said, 'Hey—are you Binsky?' I left the next day."

At the bottom of the e-mail, Banksy had appended a file. I opened it, and the screen filled with a black-and-white image. An artist—shown in profile, with proud posture and Vandyke whiskers—sits in the shade of a parasol. Next to him, propped on an easel, stands a canvas covered with graffiti. The artist's fingers are gnarled, like a rat. ♦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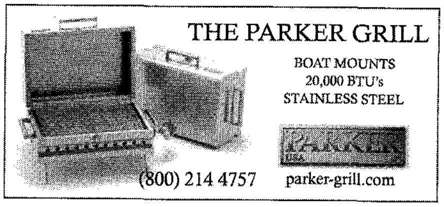
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Can a seventeen-mile-long collider unlock the universe?

BY ELIZABETH KOLBERT

The European Organization for Nuclear Research, known as CERN, has its offices on the outskirts of Geneva, in an area once devoted to dairy farms and now given over to sprawl. The offices occupy several dozen buildings, some of them in Switzerland and the remainder, a few hundred yards away, in France. The buildings are reachable by roads with names like Route Bohr, Route Schrödinger, and Route Curie. By the entrance to the complex, there is a museum—nearly empty the day I visited—that attempts to make particle physics comprehensible to the general public. Behind that there is a park where bits of old cyclotrons are displayed, like playground equipment from Mars.

If you think of the sciences as a tower, with one field resting on another until you reach, say, botany or physiology, then particle physics represents the bottommost floor. The first key experiment was conducted in 1909, under the direction of Ernest Rutherford. When Rutherford shot alpha particles at a wafer-thin sheet of gold foil, a small proportion of the particles bounced right back, a phenomenon that he described as "almost as incredible as if you fired a fifteen-inch shell at a piece of tissue paper and it came back to hit you." Rutherford's work led to the realization that most of an atom's mass was concentrated in a tiny area, the nucleus. "All science is either physics or stamp-collecting," he is supposed to have said.

Since Rutherford's discovery, particle physics has provided one extraordinary—if increasingly implausible-sounding—revelation after another: first protons and neutrons, then antimatter, gluons, neutrinos, and quarks. In 1967, the existence of particles to mediate the weak force, which is responsible for radioactive decay, was theorized; in 1983, at CERN, these particles—the W and the Z—were observed and their properties measured. In 1977, the existence of what became known as the "top" quark was predicted; in 1995, at Fermilab, in Illinois, it, too, was found.

And yet, for all its triumphs, the field has been haunted by failure. The more physicists have learned about the way matter behaves at its most fundamental level, the more acutely they have become aware that something—a big something—is missing from their accounts. Among the many possibilities proposed for what's often called "new physics" is that the universe actually consists of tiny strands (or strings) of energy; that it contains several dimensions beyond those that we perceive; that it is full of mysterious particles—"sparticles"—that have yet to be detected; that it is not a universe at all but a multiverse; and that it began not with a bang but with a splat.

Sometime in the next few months, physicists at CERN will finish preparations for the most ambitious particle-physics experiment ever, which will be conducted in an apparatus modestly referred to as the Large Hadron Collider, or L.H.C. The L.H.C. fills a circular tunnel seventeen miles in circumference. To get from one side of it to the other, it is necessary to drive through several towns, and then descend three hundred feet in an elevator. Alternatively, it is possible to ride through the tunnel in one of the dozens of bicycles CERN provides for its staff, but in that case a supply of emergency oxygen is required.

The L.H.C. is considered the best—some would say the only—hope for testing the theories of "new physics" against material reality. Once the collider begins operating at full power—in early 2008, if all goes well—nearly half the particle physicists in the world will be involved in analyzing its four-million-megabyte-per-hour stream of data. Few events in the history of science have had a bigger buildup. It's been suggested that the

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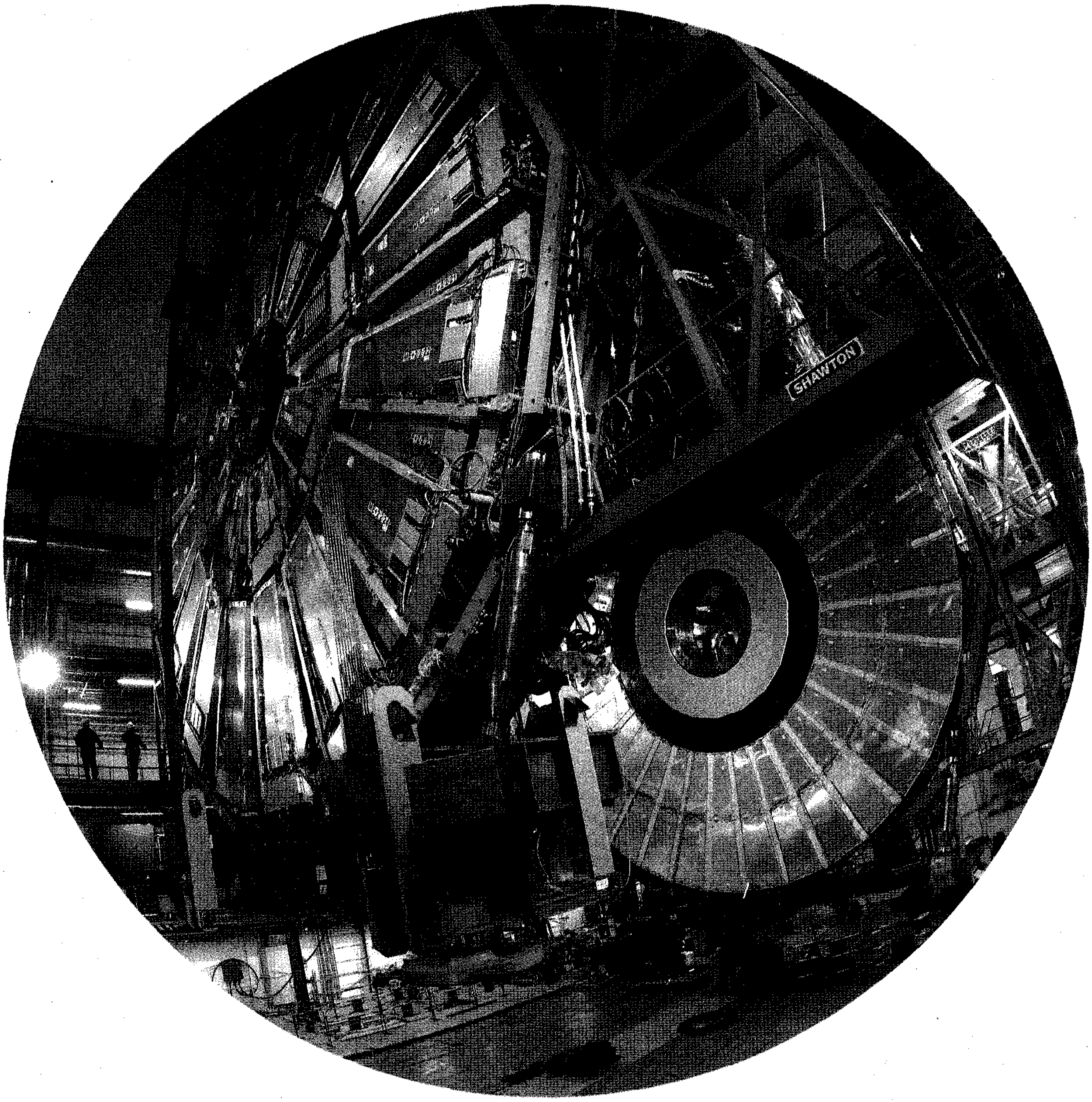

L.H.C. will unlock the secrets of the universe or, barring that, prove this ambition to be hopeless.

The L.H.C. is a kind of Babel built underground. Dozens of countries have manufactured its components, and dozens more have lent manpower and expertise. (Some contracts went to Russian physicists who previously worked for the Soviet military; in this way, the collider has provided a livelihood for scientists whose employment options might otherwise include selling nuclear secrets.) When I ate in CERN's lunchroom, I heard people speaking English, French, German, and Italian, as well as several languages that I couldn't identify. The place was so crowded that it took me five minutes to pay for a cup of coffee, proving the elemental truth that man can build a superconducting collider but not a functional cafeteria.

CERN's chief scientific officer, Jos Engelen, is from the Netherlands. He serves under the director general, who is from France, and alongside the chief financial officer, who is from Germany. I went to speak to Engelen in his office; behind his desk a chart indicated when the various parts of the collider are supposed to be completed. It was a crazy quilt of multicolored blocks, with lines radiating in all directions. Engelen greeted me with a half-ironic cheerfulness that struck me as very Dutch. Among his responsibilities is dealing with the frequent calls and letters CERN receives about the possibility that the Large Hadron Collider will destroy the world. When I asked about this, Engelen picked up a Bic pen and placed it in front of me.

"In quantum mechanics, there is a probability that this pen will fall through the table," he said. "All of a sudden, it will be on the floor. Because it can behave as a wave, it can go through; we call that the 'tunnel effect.' If you calculate the probability that this happens, it is not identical to zero. It is a very small probability. But it never happens. I've never seen it hap-

Part of the Compact Muon Solenoid particle detector is lowered into place three hundred feet below ground.

pen. You have never seen it happen. But to the general public you make a casual remark, 'It is not identical to zero, it is very small,' and..." He shrugged.

Worries about the end of the planet have shadowed nearly every high-energy experiment. Such concerns were given a boost by *Scientific American*—presumably inadvertently—in 1999. That summer, the magazine ran a letter to the editor about Brookhaven's Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider, then nearing completion. The letter suggested that the Brookhaven collider might produce a "mini black hole" that would be drawn toward the center of the earth, thus "devouring the entire planet within minutes." Frank Wilczek, a physicist who would later win a Nobel Prize, wrote a response for the magazine. Wilczek dismissed the idea of mini black holes devouring the earth, but went on to raise a new possibility: the collider could produce strangelets, a form of matter that some think might exist at the center of neutron stars. In that case, he observed, "one might be concerned about an 'ice-9'-type transition," wherein all surrounding matter could be converted into strangelets and the world as we know it would vanish. Wilczek labelled his own suggestion "not plausible," but the damage had been done. "BIG BANG MACHINE COULD DESTROY EARTH" ran the headline in the London *Times*. Brookhaven was forced to appoint a committee to look into this and other disaster scenarios. (The committee concluded that "we are safe from a strangelet initiated catastrophe.")

"I know Frank Wilczek," Engelen told me. "He is an order of magnitude smarter than I am. But he was perhaps a bit naïve." Engelen said that CERN officials are now instructed, with respect to the L.H.C.'s world-destroying potential, "not to say that the probability is very small but that the probability is *zero*."

I asked Engelen how he would explain the project of particle physics to a non-physicist, or if he thought such an explanation was even advisable. "We simply want to know what the world is made of, and how," he said. "What is in here"—he rapped on his desk with his knuckles—"and how these particles in here constitute a table."

"Let us start with Ernest Rutherford in the beginning of the last century," he went on. "Rutherford understood what an atom looks like. It is a fat, heavy nucleus, with very light electrons orbiting around. The next step is we discovered objects inside the nucleus, one called the proton, the other the neutron. That is the pattern. As a next step, people started to wonder about these protons and neutrons, whether there is structure in there. And they started probing that. And they found that there is structure in there. There are quarks in there. And what we want is to reduce the world to objects that have no structure, that are points, that are as simple as we can imagine. And then build it up from there again."

So far, physicists have succeeded in observing sixteen pointlike, or fundamental, particles, a number that increases if you count antimatter particles, or if you

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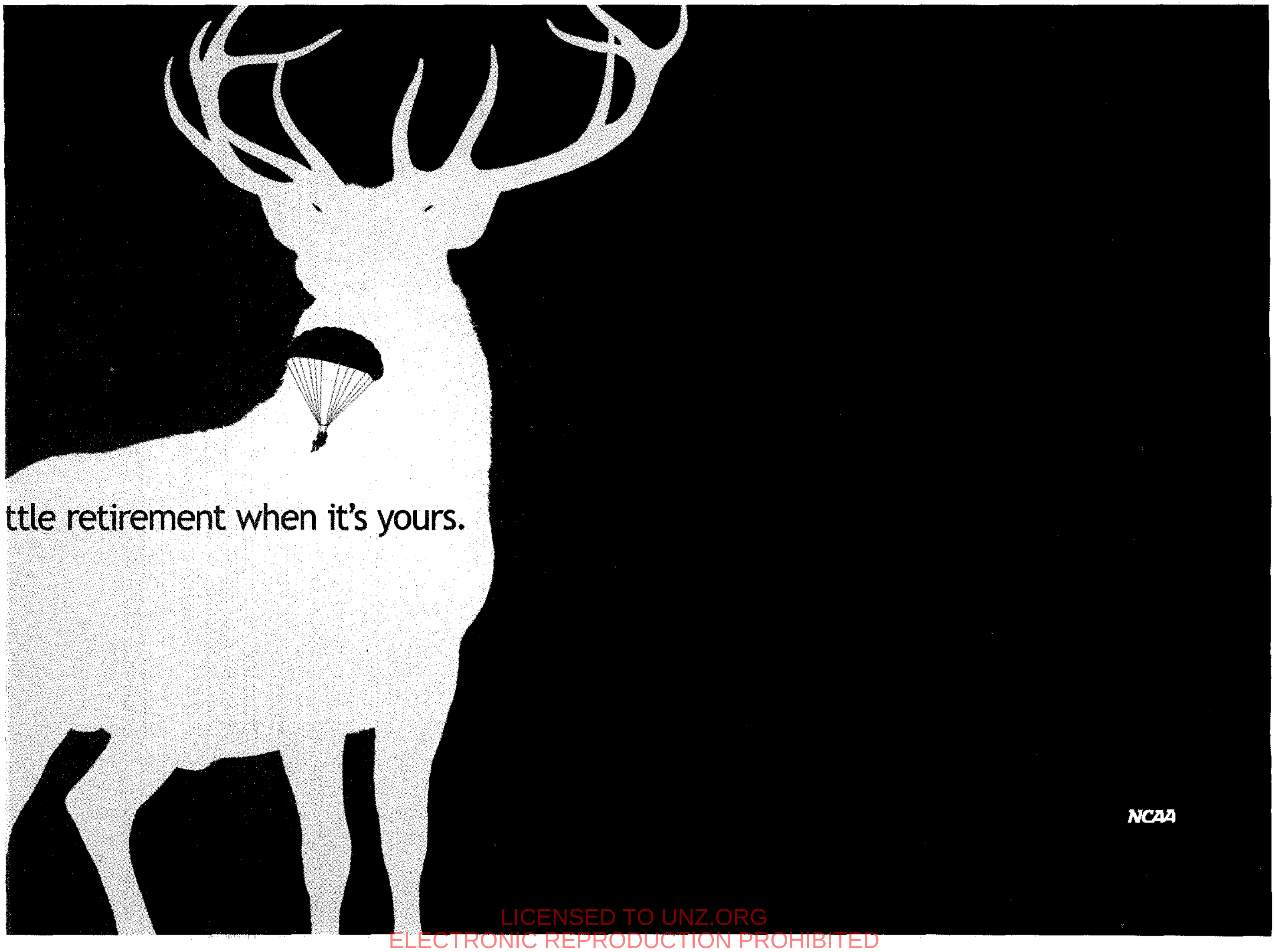
differentiate among, say, the eight types of gluons. Particles in the largest group, called fermions, in honor of Enrico Fermi, are the stuff of matter. Fermions include electrons and quarks, which come in the whimsical-sounding varieties up, down, charm, strange, top, and bottom. (A hadron is a collection of quarks, or quarks and antiquarks. A proton is a hadron composed of two up quarks and one down; a neutron consists of two downs and one up.) Fermions also include neutrinos, which, somewhat unnervingly, stream through our bodies at the rate of trillions per second. "Neutrinos, they are very small," John Updike's poem "Cosmic Gall" observes. "And do not interact at all."

Hypothetically at least, there is also a seventeenth particle, known as the Higgs. The Higgs particle was first postulated more than forty years ago by the Scottish physicist Peter Higgs, and has been sought—fruitlessly—at every major collider built since then. Its discovery would have many fantastic implications, one of which is that the void of space is not really void but is permeated by an invisible field that acts a bit like cosmic molasses. This Higgs field, if it exists, exerts a drag on matter passing through it, lending mass to particles that otherwise wouldn't have any. Without the Higgs, physicists have no way to explain why fundamental particles weigh anything at all, since, according to theory, they should be massless. The fact that the Higgs is central to modern physics even though it has never been found has prompted one Nobel laureate to label it the rug under which the discipline sweeps its ignorance and a second to dismiss it as the "toilet" into which physics flushes its inconsistencies. A third Nobel winner has labelled it the "God particle."

"We are going to make that particle," Engelen told me. "Or we are going to show that it doesn't exist."

The day that I met with Engelen, I also spoke with the deputy head of CERN's physics department, Michael Doser. Doser is tall and lanky, with fuzzy blondish hair and a narrow stripe of beard that runs down the middle of his chin. His primary interest is antimatter.

"If you think about what matter is, you end up with a very Zen-like answer," he told me. "If you look at what a quark is, or an electron, the primary constituents of matter, they're pointlike particles. They have no spatial extent. They have a number of properties, like mass and charge, and that's it. In a way, they're mathematical figments, and they're separated by vacuum—mathematical figments in nothing. And antimatter is the opposite—mathematical figments with the opposite charge." When matter and antimatter meet, they annihilate each other in a burst of energy. It is believed that in the Big Bang equal quantities of matter and antimatter were produced. But this theory makes it difficult to explain certain basic facts, like you and me and countless galaxies. How to account for the abundance of matter in the universe, and the shortage of antimatter, Doser told me, "is one of the most em-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barrassing questions in particle physics."

Doser began his career at CERN in 1991, at which point most of the physicists at the organization were working on a project known as the Large Electron-Positron Collider, or LEP. Basically, LEP was a high-precision matter/antimatter demolition-derby track. Billions of electrons looping around in one direction were, at discrete intervals, made to cross paths with billions of antielectrons—or positrons—moving the opposite way. Where the beams crossed, huge detectors were set up to record the smashups.

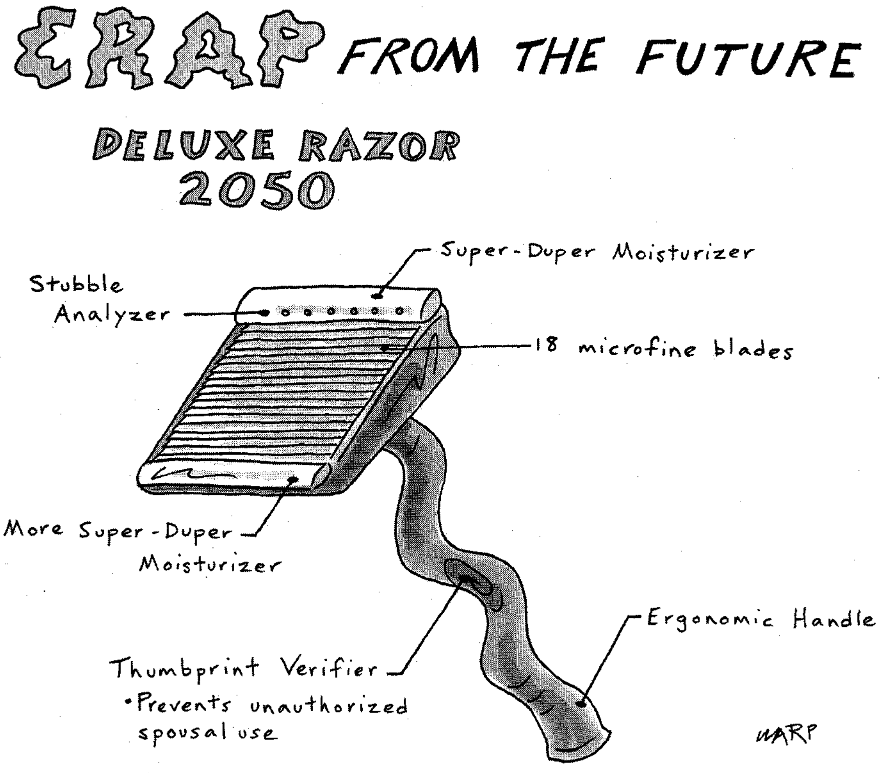
The L.H.C., Doser explained, relies on much the same design, and, in fact, makes use of the tunnel originally dug for LEP. Instead of electrons and positrons, however, the L.H.C. will send two beams of protons circling in opposite directions. Protons are a good deal more massive than electrons—roughly eighteen hundred times more—which means they can carry more energy. For this reason, they are also much harder to manage.

"Basically, what you must have to accelerate any charged particles is a very strong electric field," Doser said. "And the longer you apply it the more energy you can give them. In principle, what you'd want is an infinitely long linear structure, in which particles just keep getting pushed faster and faster. Now, because you can't build an infinitely long accelerator, you build a circular accelerator." Every time a proton makes a circuit around the L.H.C. tunnel, it will receive electromagnetic nudges to make it go faster until, eventually, it is travelling at 99.9999991 per cent of the speed of light. "It gets to a hair below the speed of light very rapidly, and the rest of the time is just trying to sliver down this hair." At this pace, a proton completes eleven thousand two hundred and forty-five circuits in a single second.

"The more energetic the particles are, the more force you need to keep them on orbit," Doser went on. "They want to go straight. And so you need very strong magnetic fields." In the L.H.C., such strong fields are required that they cannot be produced by conventional, or so-called "warm," magnets. Instead, the L.H.C. beam pipe has been encased in superconducting magnets, cooled with superfluid helium. These magnets are supposed to operate at minus 271.25 degrees Celsius—minus 456.25 degrees Fahrenheit—a temperature colder than that of deep space. Doser noted that there are many hazards involved in working with such powerful magnets; for example, if a bolt or a screw is left lying around when they are turned on, it can fly through the apparatus like a bullet. He recalled that as a graduate student he had once lost a wrench in a machine this way: "It cost me a year." Meanwhile, if any of the magnets fail, the beams, each of which is supposed to contain something like three hundred trillion protons, could veer off course and, in short order, burn a hole through the collider. "That's why people are so nervous about starting up," Doser said. (In fact, a few weeks after my visit to CERN, during a test of a set of magnets known as an "inner triplet," a support failed, bursting a pipe and spewing helium into the tunnel. The failure of the support, which was produced in the United States, was attributed to a simple engineering error.)

When protons crash into each other at 99.9999991 per cent the speed of light, the resultant mess is usually just that—the subatomic equivalent of shattered glass and twisted metal. But stranger things can happen. Just as it is possible to convert mass into energy—as in a nuclear explosion—the reverse is also true: energy can be transformed into mass according to the Einsteinian equation $E=mc^2$ (c being the speed of light). In this way, new particles can be produced that are more massive than those that entered the collision in the first place. The process might be compared to smashing two high-speed Priuses into each other and finding that they have rematerialized as a tank.

By now, the Higgs has been sought for so long that physicists have a pretty clear idea of how much it must weigh. The lower bound is around 120 times more than a proton—or roughly 2×10^{-22} grams. The upper bound is about 210 times as much as a proton. The most powerful collider currently in operation is Fermilab's Tevatron, outside Chicago. The Tevatron, which smashes protons into antiprotons, can accelerate particles to an energy of just under a trillion electron volts, or one TeV. (An electron volt is the amount of energy acquired by a single electron falling through a potential difference of one volt.) So far, the Tevatron has failed to reveal the Higgs, though physicists there are actively looking for it. The L.H.C. will accelerate particles to seven TeV, which means that it will be seven times as powerful as the Tevatron. This should be more than enough energy to produce the Higgs, if there is a Higgs to produce. It may also be enough to uncover much more than the Higgs. Depending on how the universe is con-



structed, extra dimensions, mini black holes, and the source of so-called “dark matter” may all be revealed at CERN. Any black holes created, Doser was quick to assure me, would be entirely benign.

On my second day at CERN, I drove out to the detector farthest from Geneva—the Compact Muon Solenoid—which is to operate in, or really underneath, the town of Cessy, France. Robert Cousins, a physicist visiting CERN from the University of California at Los Angeles, had agreed to show me around. When we met in the C.M.S. parking lot, Cousins was wearing a bright-yellow hard hat. He handed me one to put on.

The L.H.C. will have four main detectors, spaced at intervals around the tunnel like beads on a bracelet. Each is being constructed by a different team according to a different design, the theory being that any interesting phenomena missed by one should be captured by the others. The teams share information, but there is a certain amount of cheerful rivalry among them. C.M.S., in particular, has been plagued by difficulties—during excavations, the soil in Cessy proved so soupy that the ground had to be frozen with liquid nitrogen—and before I went to look at it a physicist who is not affiliated with the project told me that C.M.S. was sometimes referred to as “See a Mess.”

Cousins led me into a vast, hangar-like building where the detector was being assembled. There was a loud clanging coming from all directions. Iron rings several stories high were sitting on hydraulic lifts. At the far end of the hangar, a huge shaft dropped down several hundred feet. Cousins said that the shaft would be used to lower the detector, piece by piece, to the level of the L.H.C. tunnel. We boarded an elevator, and got out near the bottom. A section of the detector that had already been lowered into place loomed up in front of us. It looked like the underside of a rocket ship.

It is one of the paradoxes of particle physics that fundamental particles, though pointlike and indivisible, are also generally unstable. In fact, the heavier particles are so short-lived that even to speak of their having an existence seems faintly ludicrous; a top quark, for example, is estimated to last no more than 1×10^{-24} seconds. (For comparison’s sake, 1×10^{-24} centuries comes to three millionths of a billionth of a second.) When unstable particles break down, new, lighter particles are produced. Some of these are likely to be unstable as well, and to break down further. The outcome of this process is a distinctive scattering of “decay products,” which physicists refer to as a particle’s “signature.”

In order to “read” such a signature, a detector has to capture all the decay products that come flying out after a collision and measure their properties. This requires layer after layer of detecting elements; at C.M.S., these are arranged in the shape of an enormous jelly roll. The innermost layer, known as the tracker, consists of some seventy-five million silicon sensors. The next layer, which measures the energies of photons and electrons, contains eighty thousand crystals of lead tungstate. Surrounding this are brass-and-plastic scintillators for tracking hadrons and a tube-shaped magnet—a superconducting solenoid—twenty feet in diameter. Finally, there are several iron rings of increasing circumference. These hold sensors to detect muons, which are essentially heavy electrons. (Neutrinos can’t be measured directly, and are therefore factored in as an absence.) All told, the Compact Muon Solenoid will weigh twenty-eight million pounds. It will hold enough iron to reconstruct the Eiffel Tower. Apparently, “compact” is a relative term.

Cousins explained that the information gathered by each layer of C.M.S. would be analyzed virtually instantaneously, and a decision made by the detector’s computers whether to ignore the collision or to save the results for further study by recording them on tape. “There are famous high-energy-physics experiments that missed discoveries because they weren’t writing them to tape,” he told me. We were walking back through the hangar, past the giant iron rings, which were painted fire-truck red. “This is why we try not to be too specific about which theoretical speculations we care about. We add up all the energy, and if it’s a huge number we write that event to tape. If on one side of the detector it’s a not-so-huge number, but there is nothing on the other side, so it’s a huge imbalance, we get excited about that, and we write that to tape, too.”

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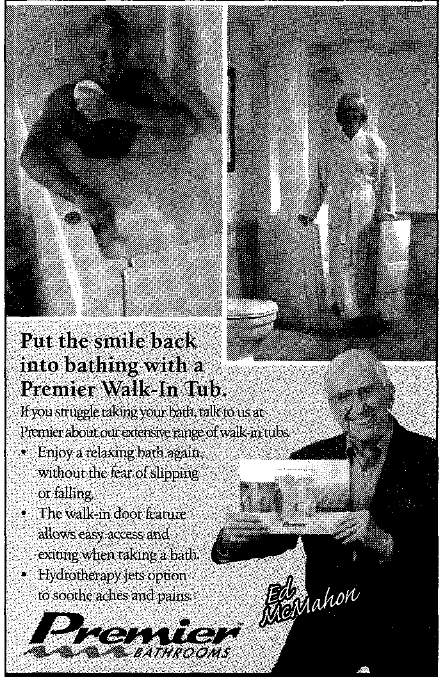

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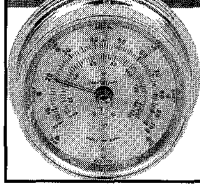

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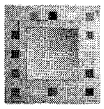

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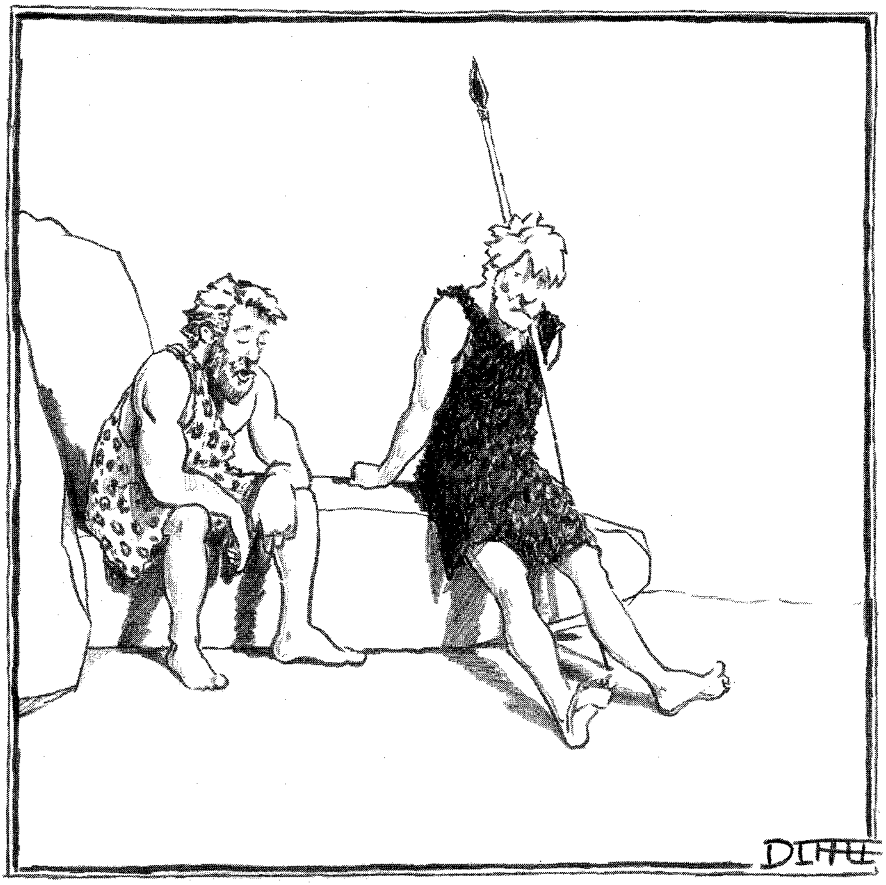


"Og discovered fire, and Thorak invented the wheel. There's nothing left for us."

• •

zipping through C.M.S. at any given moment will actually crash into one another. Still, this fraction represents an enormous number. When the L.H.C. is operating at full "luminosity," it is expected that the beams will cross forty million times a second and that each crossing will produce twenty collisions. C.M.S. will write fewer than .001 per cent of the crossings to tape; even so, it will be recording six thousand per minute, or three hundred and sixty thousand per hour, or some six million per week. The three other main detectors at CERN will generate similar amounts of data. There are many ways to represent a data stream of this magnitude; one that stuck with me was in terms of CDs. If all the L.H.C. data were burned onto disks, the stack would rise at the rate of a mile a month.

Lodged somewhere in this tower of information should be the signature of the Higgs, or, really, signatures, since the particle is expected to decay in a variety of ways. These signatures will look an awful lot like the signatures of other unstable particles. One physicist I spoke to compared the computational challenge of distinguishing a Higgs to finding a needle not in one haystack but in ten. I thought it sounded more like finding a needle in a needle factory.

Particle physicists come in two distinct varieties, which, rather like matter and antimatter, are very much intertwined and, at the same time, agonistic. Experimentalists build machines. Theorists sit around and think. "I am happy to eat Chinese dinners with theorists," the Nobel Prize-winning experimentalist Samuel C. C. Ting once reportedly said. "But to spend your life doing what they tell you is a waste of time."

"If I occasionally neglect to cite a theorist, it's not because I've forgotten," Leon Lederman, another Nobel-winning experimentalist, writes in his chronicle of the search for the Higgs. "It's probably because I hate him."

A few weeks after I returned from talking to the experimentalists at CERN, I went to speak to Nima Arkani-Hamed, a theorist at Harvard. Arkani-Hamed, who is thirty-five, has an oval face, deep-set eyes, and dark, shoulder-length hair. The day I visited, he was dressed entirely in black. He immediately offered me an espresso, which he made at a little machine that spit out one cupful at a time. "I've been trying to understand something about the fact that the universe is accelerating," he explained, erasing a double-wide blackboard covered with equations.

"Often, this kind of physics is referred to as particle physics, which I don't like," Arkani-Hamed told me. "People get the mistaken impression that what we care about is the particles. The science is characterized like: What are things made of? What are the ultimate building blocks of matter? I hate that. That sounds a lot like chemistry, and it's not like that at all. There are many, many more exciting things in nature than some random elementary particles.

"The reason we go to short distances isn't to probe the building blocks of matter," he went on. "It's because for four hundred years fundamental physics has been on this trajectory of unifying seemingly disparate things. We've found that, as we understand more, apparently incredibly disparate phenomena turn out to be different aspects of a more surprising, more beautiful answer than we could have anticipated—and often even hoped for. This started with Newton, who realized that the force dragging the apple down was the same force holding the moon around the earth. It continued with the realization that electricity and magnetism are different aspects of the same thing. Relativity told us that space and time are different aspects of the same thing. There's more and more unity in our understanding of nature. And we've seen, especially over the last hundred years, that the essential unity and the essential simplicity best reveal themselves at short-distance scales. So it's not that we care about the particles. We care about the laws."

Taped to the wall of Arkani-Hamed's office is a graph labelled "LHC Luminosity Profile." It shows when various phenomena—including the Higgs—should, if they exist, be revealed. Arkani-Hamed is a frequent visitor to CERN, and every time he goes, he told me, "it's like a religious experience." To prepare for the start-up of the collider, he has helped organize a series of dress rehearsals, called the L.H.C. Olympics. In these exercises, one team, playing God, chooses, out of the many models of the universe proposed by theorists, one to be true. The team then generates the sort of data that, according to this model, should be produced at the L.H.C. The other teams have to analyze the data to try to arrive back at the theoretical model the numbers are supposed to reflect. There are no winners or losers, Arkani-Hamed explained. "But afterward some people are high-fiving each other and other people are being consoled." He added, "It's an amazing blast."

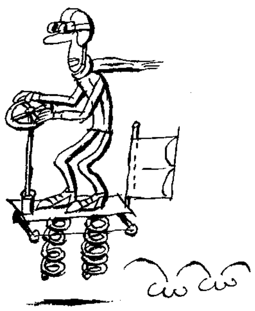
One source of tension between experimentalists and theorists is the awkward matter of credit. Who should get the glory when a discovery is made: the theorist who proposed the idea, or the experimentalist who found the evidence for it? In this context, even access to L.H.C. data is a vexed subject; in the United States, the groups that have worked on building the detectors will receive the raw data, but they're not likely to share it. Arkani-Hamed joked that in order to get at the information theorists might have to find a "Deep Throat" who will pass them the data in secret.

"There is a sense among many experimentalists that theorists are a bunch of irresponsible little spoiled brats who get to sit around all day, having all these fun ideas, drinking espresso and goofing off, with next to no accountability," he said. "Meanwhile, they're out there, nose to the grindstone, for ten years; they've built this damn detector, and damn it if they're not going to be the ones to figure it out! And so this stuff that we're doing, there's some Johnny-come-lately feeling like 'Oh, now that it's all done the theorists finally want to think about how they're going to solve this'; it's like there are theorists swooping in to try to take it from them. I'm exaggerating slightly, but not much."

"It's a general fact about physics that the people you tend to remember are the theorists," he went on. "At least in the mythology, experiment plays a less central role. And there's a natural reason for that, because the ultimate goal isn't to observe things about nature; the ultimate goal is to understand and explain things about nature. So, for that reason, it's a chicken-and-egg problem. But definitely you want to be the chicken."

Arkani-Hamed is often called a string theorist, although he is more closely associated with ideas like large extra dimensions—large being on the scale of a tenth of a millimetre—and a hybrid theory known as "split supersymmetry." String theory posits that the universe is composed of tiny strands of energy, which vibrate at different frequencies, creating what appear to be different particles. In its most popular form, string theory demands the existence of seven dimensions beyond the usual four—three in space and one in time—that we're familiar with. Supersymmetry, meanwhile, which is often referred to by the acronym SUSY (pronounced soo-see), holds that every particle has a "superpartner" with a different spin, spin here being understood not as it is in everyday life but as a fixed property of a particle that determines some of its basic characteristics. Under the naming system that's been devised for these hypothetical superpartners, the counterpart of a quark would be a squark, and that of a photon a photino. (The superpartner of the as yet undiscovered Higgs would be a Higgsino.) It has been proposed that these "superparticles" could account for the dark matter that physicists estimate makes up nearly a quarter of the universe.

String theory and supersymmetry are enormously compelling to theorists, so much so that their proponents dominate the theory groups at most élite universities. (As of 2000, at least ten thousand scientific papers on supersymmetry, and several thousand more on string theory, had been written.) Both aim at further unification, and both—to varying degrees—resolve problems that have frustrated physicists for decades. Arkani-Hamed spent nearly two hours trying to take me through the details of just one of these—the so-called "hierarchy problem." In the process, he consumed four or five or six cups of espresso—even this I lost track of. Broadly speaking, the hierarchy problem has to do with mathematical contortions, known to physicists as "fine-tuning," that must be performed in order to account for the fact that gravity is so weak compared to the other forces.



"This is not just a little weird," Arkani-Hamed told me. "It's incredibly weird. The big question that we don't have an answer to, or that we have an answer to but it seems absurd, is: Why do we have a macroscopic universe at all?"

The trouble with string theory and supersymmetry is that, at this point, they remain entirely theoretical. The last confirmed breakthrough in particle physics was a set of equations known as the Standard Model. Developed in the early nineteen-seventies, the equations describe the behavior of all known forms of matter and all known forces, with the notable exception of gravity. Despite the model's limitations as a fundamental theory of nature—the hierarchy problem is just one of its many shortcomings—the predictions it has generated have been borne out, with astonishing precision, at one collider after another. (The Higgs would represent the last element of the model to be confirmed.) String theory, by contrast, has yet to provide a single prediction that could be definitively tested. As for supersymmetry, which is generally considered a precondition for string theory, all efforts to confirm its predictions have so far failed: at the energy levels achieved by colliders to date, not a trace of a squark or a photino has turned up. As Lee Smolin, a physicist at Canada's Perimeter Institute, observed in a recent critique of contemporary theory, eventually "you begin to feel like Sbozo the clown. Or Bozo the clownino. Or swhatever."

To theorists, the tantalizing promise of the L.H.C. is that it will, finally, supply the evidence of "new physics" that they've been waiting for. Certain patterns of missing energy, for example, would suggest the existence of extra dimensions, as would the creation of mini black holes. Different results—also in the form of missing energy—would indicate the existence of squarks or other superparticles. There are good theoretical reasons to expect these phenomena to begin to appear at the energy level of the L.H.C., or so at least Arkani-Hamed tried to explain to me over several more espressos. He told me that he was completely confident the Higgs would be found at the collider: "I would bet many, many months' salary." He also said that if the Higgs was the only result, the L.H.C. would be a disappointment. "We theorists, we're a hard lot to please. We've taken things for granted for so long we say, 'Oh, yeah, for sure you'll discover the Higgs.' But the things we're really interested in are all these major puzzles."

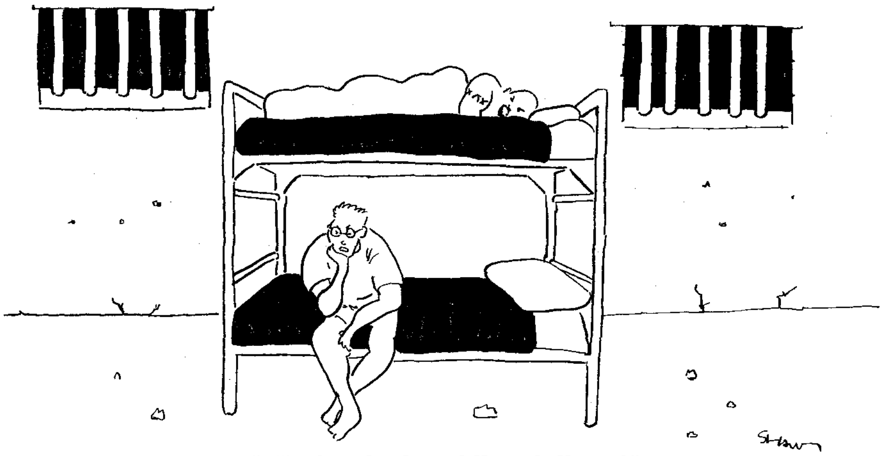
Eventually, some of Arkani-Hamed's graduate students wandered into his office. They had brought with them a Diet Coke, which Arkani-Hamed began to drink out of his espresso cup, and a hundred-page paper that they—and he—were planning to release that day. The opening sentence of the paper declared, "With the upcoming turn-on of the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), high energy physics is on the verge of entering its most exciting period in a generation." (A later sentence noted, "As the reader might find intuitive, we can tremendously improve our scheme over the constant approximation by including the leading order near-threshold behavior of matrix elements.")

In 1969, the Congressional Joint Committee on Atomic Energy held a hearing at which the physicist Robert Wilson was called to testify. Wilson, who had served as the chief of experimental nuclear physics for the Manhattan Project, was at that point the head of CERN's main rival, Fermilab, and in charge of $250 million that Congress had recently allocated for the lab to build a new collider. Senator John Pastore, of Rhode Island, wanted to know the rationale behind a government expenditure of that size. Did the collider have anything to do with promoting "the security of the country"?

Wilson: No sir, I don't believe so.
Pastore: Nothing at all?
Wilson: Nothing at all.
Pastore: It has no value in that respect?
Wilson: It only has to do with the respect with which we regard one another, the dignity of men, our love of culture. . . . It has to do with are we good painters, good sculptors, great poets? I mean all the things we really venerate in our country and are patriotic about. . . . It has nothing to do directly with defending our country except to make it worth defending.

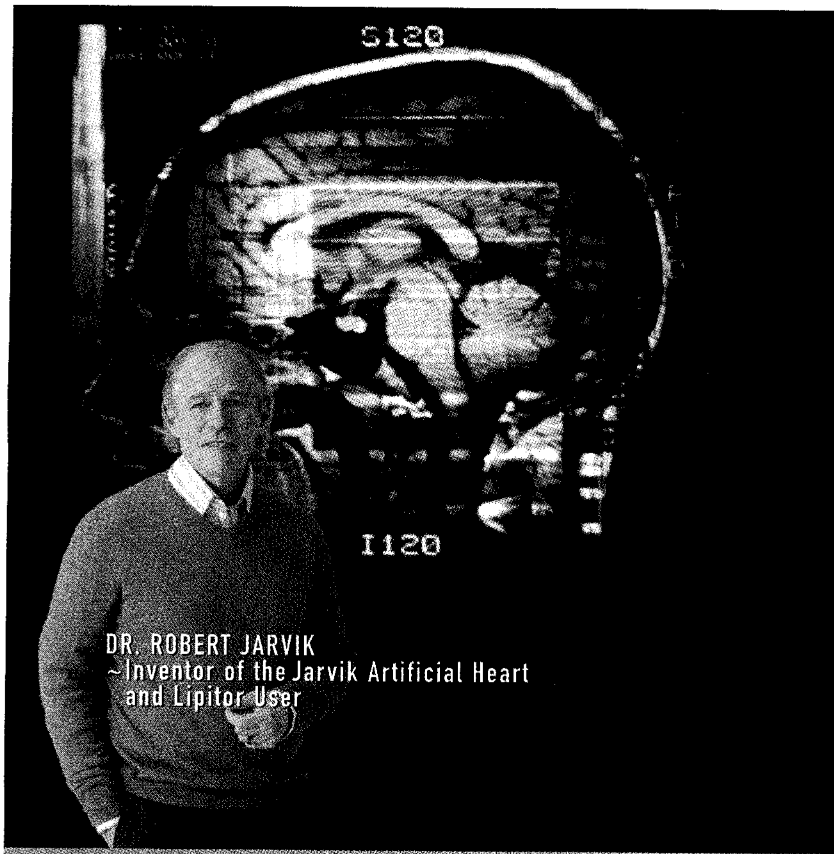
Asked to explain how their work, supported by public funds, contributes to the public good, particle physicists often cite Wilson, or offer some variation on his non-answer answer: the search for knowledge cannot be justified on other grounds; its value, like the particles under study, is irreducible.

The cost of the L.H.C. is expected to run to more than $8 billion, and this doesn't include the price of the tunnel, which was originally dug for LEP. Most of the funding is being provided by European taxpayers; Germany has contributed the most—around twenty per cent of the total—and Britain and France have each contributed slightly less than that. (The United States is contributing a little more than $500 million.) Meanwhile, physicists are already lobbying for the next generation of machines. The plan for the International Linear Collider, which, as its name suggests, would be built in a straight line rather than a ring, calls for smashing electrons and positrons together at the midpoint of a tunnel twenty miles long. According to the Web site that has been set up for the I.L.C., the hypothetical collider's design would allow for "an upgrade" to a thirty-mile-long machine "during the second stage of the project." The even more ambitious Very Large Hadron Collider would occupy a tunnel a hundred and forty miles in circumference.


"Would a little cuddling kill you?"

In principle, colliders could just keep on getting bigger—the Incredibly Large Hadron Collider!—and commensurately more expensive. As a practical matter, of course, there's a limit, and it's quite possible that limit has already been reached. At CERN, nearly every physicist I spoke to recalled the sad—very sad—story of the Superconducting Super Collider. Announced with much fanfare by President Ronald Reagan in 1987, the Superconducting Super Collider was supposed to occupy a tunnel fifty-four miles in circumference under Waxahachie, Texas. It was designed to generate beam energies of 20 TeV, roughly three times as high as those that will be achieved at CERN. Fourteen miles of the tunnel had been excavated—and $2 billion spent—when, in 1993, Congress pulled the plug. "If we find more basic building blocks of the universe, it's not going to change the way people live" is how Representative Martin R. Hoke, of Ohio, shrugged off his vote. As the historian of science Peter Galison pointed out to me, it is probably no coincidence that funding for the supercollider was cancelled almost immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union. The "dignity of men" defense of particle physics worked best at the height of the Cold War, when no one, except maybe the scientists involved, entirely believed it.

Unless funding for another collider materializes, a lot of experimentalists will soon find themselves out of work. "Half of those guys already have résumés in at hedge funds," one theorist joked to me. Arguably, the theorists' situation is not all that much more secure; at a certain point, speculations about the nature of the universe that can't be put to the test cease to be physics. The promise of the Large Hadron Collider is thus also its great burden. A truly astonishing discovery there—proof, say, of extra dimensions, or of something even weirder than that, which theorists have yet to conceive of—would provide a powerful impetus to keep particle physics going for another generation. Barring a breakthrough, it's hard to imagine how the project can continue. Such an outcome would not mean that the fundamental order of the universe is unknowable. But it might well mean that we will never know it. ♦



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atorvastatin calcium
tablets

***That means in a large clinical study, 2.8% of patients taking a sugar pill or placebo had a stroke compared to 1.5% of patients taking Lipitor.**

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: LIPITOR is a prescription drug. It is used in patients with type 2 diabetes and at least one other risk factor for heart disease such as high blood pressure, smoking or complications of diabetes, including eye disease and protein in urine, to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. When diet and exercise alone are not enough, LIPITOR is used along with a low-fat diet and exercise to lower cholesterol.

LIPITOR is not for everyone. It is not for those with liver problems. And it is not for women who are nursing, pregnant or may become pregnant. If you take LIPITOR, tell your doctor if you feel any new muscle pain or weakness. This could be a sign of rare but serious muscle side effects. Tell your doctor about all medications you take. This may help avoid serious drug interactions. Your doctor should do blood tests to check your liver function before and during treatment and may adjust your dose. The most common side effects are gas, constipation, stomach pain and heartburn. They tend to be mild and often go away.

Please see additional important information on next page.

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LIPITOR® atorvastatin calcium tablets (LIP-ih-tore)

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High cholesterol is more than just a number, it's a risk factor that should not be ignored. If your doctor said you have high cholesterol, you may be at an increased risk for heart attack. But the good news is, you can take steps to lower your cholesterol.

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Who should NOT take LIPITOR:

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BEFORE YOU START LIPITOR

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ABOUT LIPITOR

LIPITOR is a prescription medicine. Along with diet and exercise, it lowers "bad" cholesterol in your blood. It can also raise "good" cholesterol (HDL-C).

LIPITOR can lower the risk of heart attack or stroke in patients who have risk factors for heart disease such as:

- age, smoking, high blood pressure, low HDL-C, heart disease in the family, *or*
- diabetes with risk factor such as eye problems, kidney problems, smoking, or high blood pressure

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POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LIPITOR

Serious side effects in a small number of people:

- **Muscle problems** that can lead to kidney problems, including kidney failure. Your chance for muscle problems is higher if you take certain other medicines with LIPITOR.
- **Liver problems**. Your doctor may do blood tests to check your liver before you start LIPITOR and while you are taking it.

Symptoms of muscle or liver problems include:

- Unexplained muscle weakness or pain, especially if you have a fever or feel very tired
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- Brown or dark-colored urine
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Your skin and the whites of your eyes turn yellow

If you have these symptoms, call your doctor right away.

The most common side effects of LIPITOR are:

- Headache
- Diarrhea, gas
- Rash
- Constipation
- Upset stomach and stomach pain
- Muscle and joint pain

Side effects are usually mild and may go away by themselves. Fewer than 3 people out of 100 stopped taking LIPITOR because of side effects.

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Do:

- Take LIPITOR as prescribed by your doctor.
- Try to eat heart-healthy foods while you take LIPITOR.
- Take LIPITOR at any time of day, with or without food.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. But if it has been more than 12 hours since your missed dose, wait. Take the next dose at your regular time.

Don't:

- Do not change or stop your dose before talking to your doctor.
- Do not start new medicines before talking to your doctor.
- Do not give your LIPITOR to other people. It may harm them even if your problems are the same.
- Do not break the tablet.

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- Ask your doctor or health care provider.
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- Go to **www.lipitor.com** or call **1-888-LIPITOR**.

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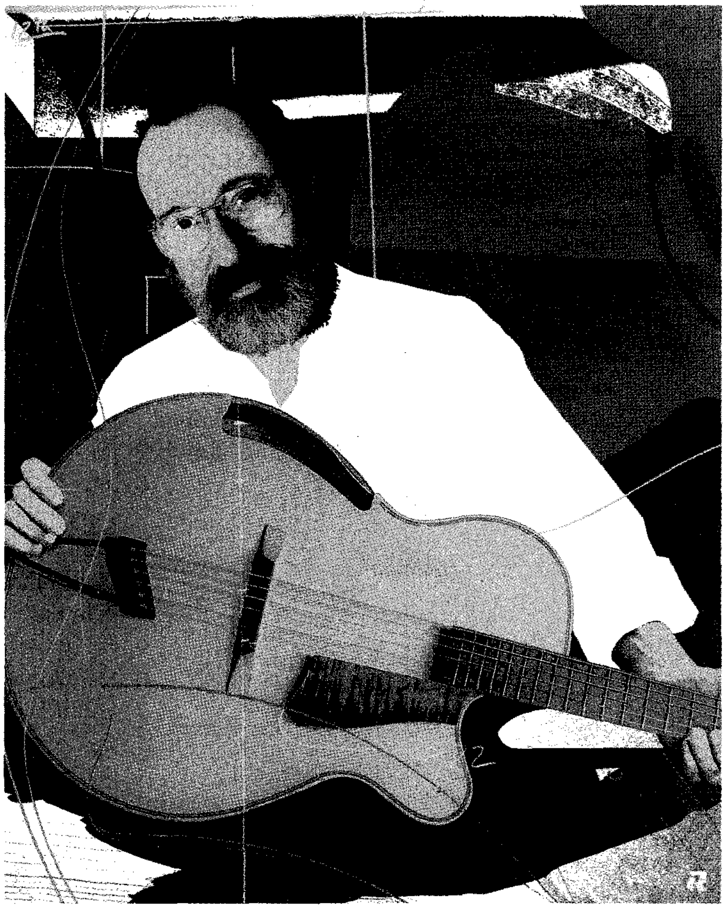
ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

STRUTS AND FRETS

Building a better guitar.

BY BURKHARD BILGER

Ken Parker's workshop lies an hour north of New York City, on a winding forest road that skirts the highlands of the Hudson River. It's a trapezoidal structure of concrete and glass, set into a steep slope like a piece of quartz, and serves Parker as a kind of Fortress of Solitude. "I'm in hiding," he told me. "I had a company for thirteen years that made thirty thousand guitars, and at least two thousand of their owners want to ask me a question." Parker's work tends to attract obsessives. He has spent his career not just building guitars but reinventing them from first principles, and his clients have included Pete Townshend, Paul Simon, Lou Reed, Eddie Van Halen, Joni Mitchell, and The Edge. On the Internet, his fans sometimes sound like Eric Clapton's of forty years ago: "Ken Parker is a god."



Ken Parker says, "A good guitar is in agreement with itself."

ILLUSTRATION JOHN RITTER/PORTRAIT REFERENCE KATRINA HERTZBERG

Parker is fifty-four. He stands more than six feet tall, with broad, ropy shoulders and thickly calloused hands—a body shaped by labor more than exercise. His forehead is a high domed outcropping; a scraggly gray beard juts from his chin. He walks with his spine stiff, his chest thrust out, a fat braid swinging behind him, like an old sailor with a tender back, and speaks in a boomy baritone that sometimes rises to a high, sweet giggle. His manner is more than genial, though it can't disguise his impatience with fools.

Guitars are often foolish devices, Parker says. Their bodies are ungainly, their necks easily warped, their intonation unreliable. The great majority are factory products, designed for assembly lines in Fullerton or Nazareth or Kalamazoo, staffed by "ladies with cat's-eye glasses and hairnets, listening to cowboy radio," as Parker puts it. In 1949, a former radio repairman named Leo Fender took a slab of ash, bolted on a neck, and screwed in some magnetic pickups to amplify the sound. Half a century later, Fender Telecasters are still made the same way. Acoustic guitars with steel strings have been around longer—they were developed in the early nineteen-hundreds and refined by the Martin company in the nineteen-thirties—and have changed even less. "Some pretty obvious things have not been tried," Parker says. "You pick up a violin and it weighs sixteen ounces. You pick up a guitar and it weighs seven pounds. Hasn't anyone wondered what a four-pound guitar sounds like?"

In the late eighties, Parker decided to take the electric guitar in hand. Together with the mechanical engineer Larry Fishman, he designed an ingenious instrument called "the Fly." Coated in fibreglass and carbon graphite, the Fly was lightweight, beautifully resonant, and nearly maintenance-free. It was awarded eleven patents, paraded on the covers of guitar magazines, and exhibited at the Smithsonian. Yet the Fly's sales fell far short of expectations. (Fender makes as many guitars in a week, Parker says, as he made in thirteen years.) Some loved its thin, twisted shape. "It looks like something you found on the beach," Joni Mitchell told Parker. The rest just thought it was strange. "Nice guitar," Keith Richards reportedly said. "But why does it have to look like a bleeding assault rifle?"

Parker sold his stake in the company in 2003, and promptly disappeared. He got a divorce, rented a cottage on Cape Ann, and thought about guitars. He fell in love with the owner of the cottage, moved into her house in the Hudson Valley, and began to build prototypes. A few months ago, some pictures of an odd new instrument showed up on his Web site. It had six strings and a slender neck, a hollow body and a high waist, but looked like no other guitar. The top was of unstained spruce, arched like the top of a violin. The neck seemed to float above the body, supported only by a golden post. The sound hole had been narrowed to a crescent and moved to the side, where it hung like a waning moon. Parker called his instrument "the Olive Branch," but as design statements go it looked more like a declaration of war. It looked like something that Picasso or Juan Gris might have painted: an old, familiar form made suddenly, startlingly modern.

The Olive Branch is an attempt to

do for acoustic guitars what the Fly tried to do for electrics, but it's in every sense an even riskier venture. It's a virtuoso's instrument for a populist music; an acoustic device for an amplified age; a radical reinvention of a design all but abandoned decades ago. When I first saw it, I asked Parker what he was thinking as he built it. Did he imagine that someday everyone would make guitars like this, or that no one else in the world could make such an instrument? He was quiet for a moment, seemingly stumped. Then he shrugged. "Both," he said.

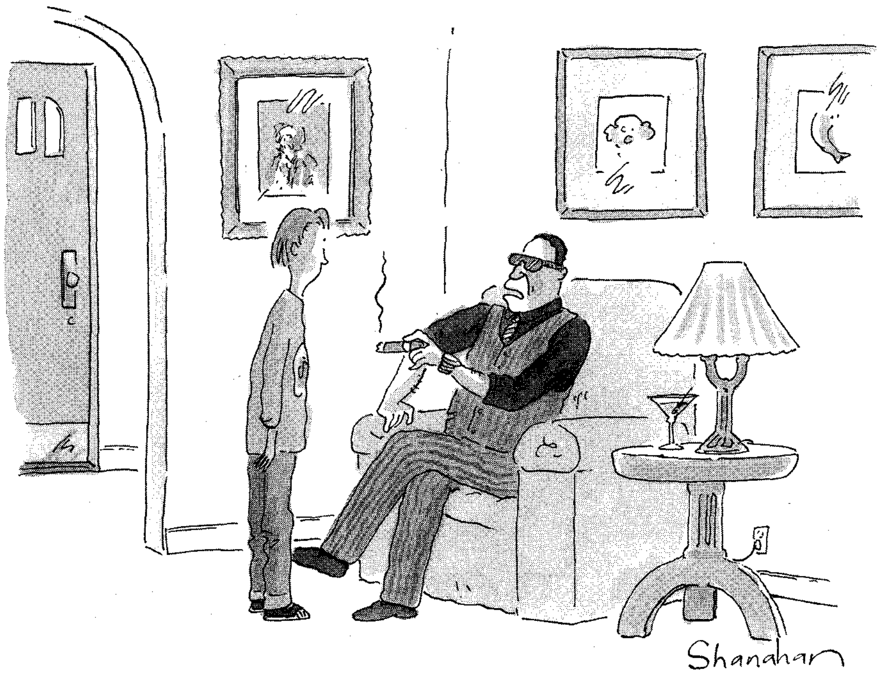
These ought to be excellent times for guitar designers. Theirs are the most popular instruments in the world, used by country crooners, gothic rockers, and African soukous players alike. Some three million guitars were sold in the United States last year—as many as all other instruments combined—and the best vintage guitars are extraordinarily valuable. Twenty years ago, a pristine 1959 Gibson Les Paul might have sold for ten thousand dollars; today, it can fetch four hundred thousand. And yet, along the way, guitars have become deeply conservative. Most electric guitars look like Les Pauls or Stratocasters, and three-quarters of all acoustic guitars are dreadnoughts—a fat-bottomed design from 1916. "This is rock and roll!" Parker says. "You would think that guitar players would be open and brave and experimental. And they are not. As a group, they are not. That guy with the purple Mohawk? He won't play anything made after 1960. Wait a minute, dude! *You* were made after 1960."

One afternoon this winter, I watched a man named Tom Murphy systematically beat up a brand-new Les Paul. Murphy, who is fifty-six, works for Gibson's custom, art, and historic division. He has thick forearms and ruddy features and a boyish devotion to the guitar heroes of his youth. Every week or two, the company sends ten or twenty guitars to Murphy's workshop, in Marion, Illinois, and he sends them back looking as if they'd been played for fifty years. When I visited, he began by etching some lines into the lacquer with a razor blade, to mimic the crackle of an old finish. He shaved the edges off the fingerboard, so that they looked worn by countless earsplitting solos. Then he took a bunch of keys and shook them over the surface, like a spider skittering over glass. To imitate years of belt wear, he held an old buckle against the back and whacked it a few times with a hammer. Then he flipped the guitar upside down and slowly ground the headstock into the concrete floor.

A "Murphyized" Gibson sells for twice the cost of a regular Les Paul, and Murphy's signed Jimmy Page replicas (complete with cigarette burns) have gone for as much as eighty thousand dollars. Fender's aged guitars have been equally successful. Customers can choose from various degrees of wear, from Closet Classic ("played maybe a few times per year and then carefully put away") to Heavy Relic ("played vigorously on a nightly basis") to the Rory Gallagher Tribute Stratocaster ("worn to the wood"). When I asked Matt Umanov, whose guitar store has been a fixture in Greenwich Village for forty years, why people buy these instruments, he made an impatient noise. "Ninety per cent of this business is male-oriented," he said. "In my opinion, most purchases are governed by four words: the zipper is down."

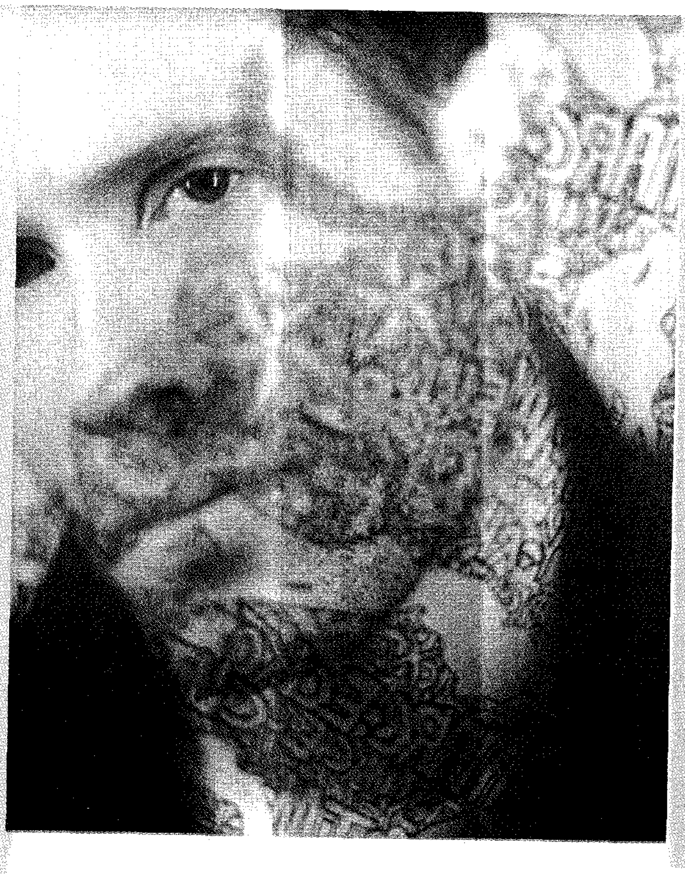
Vintage guitars, authentic or not, are hard to judge on their own merits. Their sound comes to us as a mixture of memory and acoustics, musicianship and wish-fulfillment. Without "Purple Haze" or "Voodoo Chile," the squeal and moan of a Stratocaster might seem less appealing; without "Tangled Up in Blue," a Martin might sound merely pretty. Still, the best old instruments have a harmonic richness that transcends subjectivity. Vintage Telecasters have been hooked up to oscilloscopes and found to generate more overtones than newer guitars, and even the smallest old Martins can ring as loudly as church bells. "You could put a blindfold on and you would say, 'Oh my God, that is so beautiful,'" T. J. Thompson, a guitar-maker in Concord, Massachusetts, told me. "It sings, it's balanced, it's musical. Every chord you play sounds magical."

Thompson restores vintage acoustic guitars and makes exceptional new ones. (Parker calls him "an angelically gifted builder.") He estimates that only about one in twenty prewar Martins has that mesmerizing sound, but that those alone could drive the vintage craze. "They should come with a warning," he told me. "If I put one of those old dreadnoughts in your hand, you'll never forget it. You'll long for it, and you'll sell any holdings in real estate you have, and your marriage



"And just how do you expect to become a made man, son, without a solid liberal-arts education?"

[CIT: BEHIND THE BUSINESS]



A house [illegible] ffiti

MARC ECKO HAS MOVED FROM THE GARAGE OF HIS PARENTS' HOME TO HIS OWN CORNER OFFICE IN JUST 13 YEARS. HOW DID THIS T-SHIRT GRAFFITI ARTIST BUILD MARC ECKO ENTERPRISES INTO A BILLION-DOLLAR STYLE EMPIRE?

DID YOU EVER IMAGINE you'd wind up running a mini-conglomerate?

[illegible] ve from my [illegible] d to my work, [illegible] 13 or 14 getting [illegible] help, I treated [illegible] from there.

Were there businesses on which you modeled your own?

There were other [illegible] brands [illegible] image of a person or *auteur*. It occurred to me that I could [illegible] their best practices and create a lifestyle [illegible] more contemporary, generationally relevant.

You've described yourself as a "navigator" of pop culture. What does that mean?

It's my job to know what's up, to be aware of what's going on in culture. Things can be so stylized. In the 80s, if you were into hip-hop or skating, you could only be into hip-hop or skating. I was that kid who saw the mash-up, the convergence of those lifestyles. I was always open to what was different. Being democratic, open to understanding what's behind something and why it works is my job.

How do you walk the line between building "urban style" street cred and appealing to broader audiences?

Urban style is a label I accept, not one I made. I always had the ambition to do something much bigger and less limited than that label would indicate.

You've just got to be you. You can't please everyone. I'm sincere in what I do and I'm adding value and creating an experience that wouldn't exist if I weren't here. At the end of the day, the vote happens at the cash register.

How'd you choose the rhino logo?

It was a naive thing that came from the heavens without much planning, but it started to take on meaning the more I used it. The rhino's a survivor. There's a clumsy poise about the rhinoceros that embodied the way we operated our business.

[CIT: BEHIND THE BUSINESS]

How do you run your company?
I rely on good managers. A manager must be empowered to taste victory or blood on his tongue. It took me a while to let go, but now I fly at a high enough elevation to allow real leaders to lead. It is one thing to be passionate, and an entirely other thing to be emotional.

We initially hired managers with certain titles and impressive resumes but quickly realized they didn't work within the unique culture of our company. We learned you've got to do the job yourself first to find the right person to suit your way of doing business.

What's the toughest business challenge you've faced?
Five or six years into it, we managed to get ourselves into $6.5 million in debt just from running the business naively — no proper financial management, no operational practices, no due diligence on trademarks. But that same naiveté helped us bounce right back.

How'd you turn it around?
By focusing more on the product. I became a big boy. I spent two years with an executive coach. I eased up on the dramatic emotional attachment to every creative decision. If it was right and it made sense, then it would be.

How'd you choose the philanthropies you're committed to?
After our debt crisis, we resolved to give something back, and we're disciplined in our approach to philanthropy, too. I get invitations to benefits all the time and solicited to support many great charities. But, selfishly, I choose to spend the money where I can see a difference and quantify my personal impact, as well as that of others I engage. You get a deeper, more potent sense of gratification that way. One of our biggest pushes is behind the Tikva Children's Home in Odessa, Ukraine.

Another is the Save the Rhinos initiative. After all, the rhinoceros is my best employee. Most recently we've launched S.E.E. [Sweat Equity Enterprises], a model of learning and "social entrepreneurship" that invests in the limitless imagination and entrepreneurial potential of today's youth.

Other lessons learned?
To let go of fear of things that probably won't happen. I no longer wait for things to go wrong. I work on keeping things right.

What inspires you?
I like to cook. Cooking helps me think, so I put a kitchen in my office. Beyond that, I work out to the point of physical exhaustion four times a week. That way, I don't have the energy to stress about anything.

How do you choose business partners?
Licensing partners like established footwear companies are crucial to expanding the brand. Leveraging their know-how allows us to penetrate markets quickly. Then, with strategic partners like 50 Cent and his G-Unit clothing brand, we can grow five times as fast.

You've expanded quickly from fashion into publishing and other media. What's next?
I want to keep growing in the video-gaming space. I believe it's the Wild West of media culture. There's something magical and abstract about gaming. Games aren't yet demystified — versus movies, for example; there are TV shows about the making of movies.

Are there arenas into which you wouldn't want the Ecko brand to go?
The real question is where we can take the brand successfully. We can go wherever we want to, but it needs to feel organic, true to the brand...and it needs to have the highest likelihood to succeed and sustain success.

CIT For more insight from this business maverick, visit behindthebusiness.cit.com.

Marc Ecko

[CIT: BEHIND THE BUSINESS]

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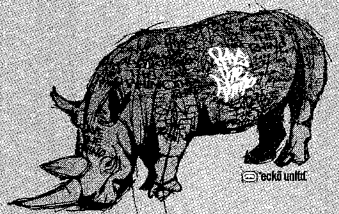

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will end, and your kids won't go to college. But you'll be happy, because you have a dreadnought."

Guitar-makers, or luthiers, as they like to be known, have tried to isolate the magic in older instruments, only to find that it lies largely in age itself. Time transforms a guitar's materials. The wood grows stiffer and more resonant. The lacquer develops hairline cracks, relaxing its straitjacket grip on the wood. The magnets in pickups weaken and rust, deepening and mellowing the tone. A new guitar is like a novice choir: a gathering of disparate parts, held together under pressure, straining to carry the same tune. The more it's played, the more it settles into its true voice. The neck and body, joints and braces, bridge and fingerboard stop fighting one another and start to sing in unison.

A good designer can duplicate some of these effects. But the sound of a vintage guitar is partly an echo of what's been lost: Brazilian rosewood, elephant ivory, old-growth spruce and mahogany—the world's best acoustic materials, now all but unavailable. "I have a piece of veneer from the twenties or thirties," Thompson told me. "I pick it up and I'm just in awe. I can hardly bend it. It has the weight of wood but it feels like ceramic. And I'm supposed to find a piece of wood in the world today that's forty-thousandths of an inch thick and that stiff? You know what? It doesn't exist."

Not long before I met Parker, my wife's uncle Ken offered to build an electric bass for my son. Ken is a retired economist in Virginia with a fully equipped wood shop in his basement. He built a lovely version of a '59 Les Paul a few years ago, and he seemed happy to have another project. My son, a vintage buff like any other, decided that the new instrument should be a copy of his teacher's bass: a hollow-bodied Gibson from the nineteen-sixties, with f-holes like a violin and a huge, echoey sound. (Its pickups are sometimes called "mudbuckers.") My job was to buy the materials and send them to Ken.

I've probably spent a couple of hundred hours in guitar stores over the years. Even a megamall can't seem to rob them of their charms: the flamboyance of the instruments, the studied scruffiness of the staff, the eager racket of half a dozen noodling guitarists—John Cage for boneheads. I usually try to find the most expensive guitar in the shop, then I whale away on some riffs widely considered kick-ass when I was in high school. Sometimes, one of the clerks comes over and asks me to stop.

The bass project unloosed this compulsion. The longer I looked for parts, the deeper I ventured into a realm of gearheads and guitar fanatics, acoustic savants and reverse engineers. Every trick of modern science and forensic carpentry, it seemed, was being used to reproduce the sound of nineteen-fifties technology. One luthier, on an island in Puget Sound, dipped his pickups in a Crockpot full of wax and wound them with a sewing-machine motor to mimic the handiwork of the old Gibson factory. Another froze his metal pickups to three hundred degrees below zero, insisting that the molecules would realign as they do with age. Some builders blasted their instruments with giant speakers to simulate the effects of years of playing. Others swore by "timeless timber": old-growth maple and other woods, dredged from the bottoms of northern rivers and lakes.

Some of the world's finest electric guitars, I read in a newsletter called *The ToneQuest Report*, are made in the town of Hyvinkää, in southern Finland. Their designer, a mad young Finn named Juha Ruokangas, uses flamed Arctic birch, pickups wound by a German guitar guru, and inlays as exquisite as Fabergé eggs. (One shows a scene from the Finnish national epic, the Kalevala.) The wood is thermo-treated—slowly heated, in a process patented by a Finnish university, to mimic the curing effects of time—and coated in a lacquer designed to crack and craze like a fifty-year-old finish. The crowning glory of a Ruokangas, though, is the nut—the thin strip at the top of the neck that lifts the strings above the fingerboard. In some of the best old instruments, the nut is made of elephant ivory and is said to lend an ineffable resonance to the tone. In a Ruokangas, it's made from the shinbone of a wild moose. "We skin them, chop them into pieces, and boil them in my yard on an open fire," Ruokangas told the editor of *ToneQuest*. "Moose bone is the best."

The Finn was an inspiration. My

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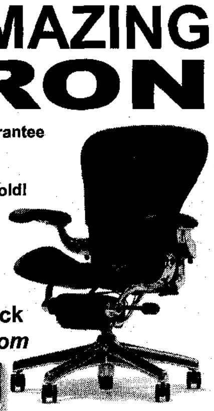

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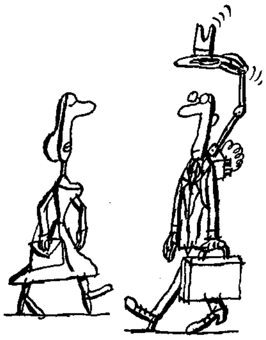
son, I'll admit, was showing signs of waning interest, but the bass project forged ahead. I bought thick boards of African black limba—"the holy grail of tone woods," according to one builder. I ordered Dark Star pickups, handmade to replicate a Swedish design used by the Grateful Dead. I found the original patent drawings for the Gibson bass, and a bassist in Louisiana who could wire the controls with vintage-correct components. For the nut, I did Ruokangas one better. I located a man in southern Alaska with a cache of fossilized walrus ivory, five thousand years old. When I had a chunk shipped to Ken's house, he sent me a digital picture of it—blackened with age like the tip of a charred spear. He was getting a little worried, he wrote.



I told Parker about the walrus ivory the first time I visited him. He gave me a look of mild pity, like a doctor who'd seen these symptoms before, then disappeared into the back of his workshop. When he returned, he was holding a large grayish bone. He'd done some nut experiments of his own, he said, in the early nineteen-eighties. "I thought, O.K., I'll make one out of every conceivable material, then see if I can tell the difference. I tried wood, brass, nickel silver, elephant ivory—everything." The bone in his hand was an ostrich femur, from a bird raised by a friend in California. "He thought it would make superior nut material, so I cut it up and made a couple of parts out of it," he said. "And, you know, it's just a bone. It barely makes a difference." He handed it to me. "Changing this is like a girl thinking that if she changes her nail polish she'll be beautiful."

It was late morning, and a pale winter sun had risen outside. The light came slanting through the workshop's high windows, kindling the sawdust in the air. Parker had populated the shop with his preoccupations: wood bins and tool cabinets, tube amplifiers and bass scrolls, a tandem bicycle and a wooden rowing shell suspended from the rafters. Along the walls, a battalion of cast-iron machines—band saw, table saw, drill press, lathe—stood with clamps and blades at the ready.

One of Parker's first jobs was in a grandfather-clock factory in Rochester, and he's never lost his love for arcane machinery. He mills most of his own metal parts, and is always inventing devices to speed construction. ("His shop is like Disneyland for me," his friend Linda Manzer, who makes guitars for Pat Metheny, told me when she visited one day.) Most luthiers wax almost mystical about wood and the hand-built qualities of their instruments. Parker compares his to speedboats and race cars—engineering challenges as much as artistic ones. "I'm a toolmaker," he says. "I make tools for musicians."

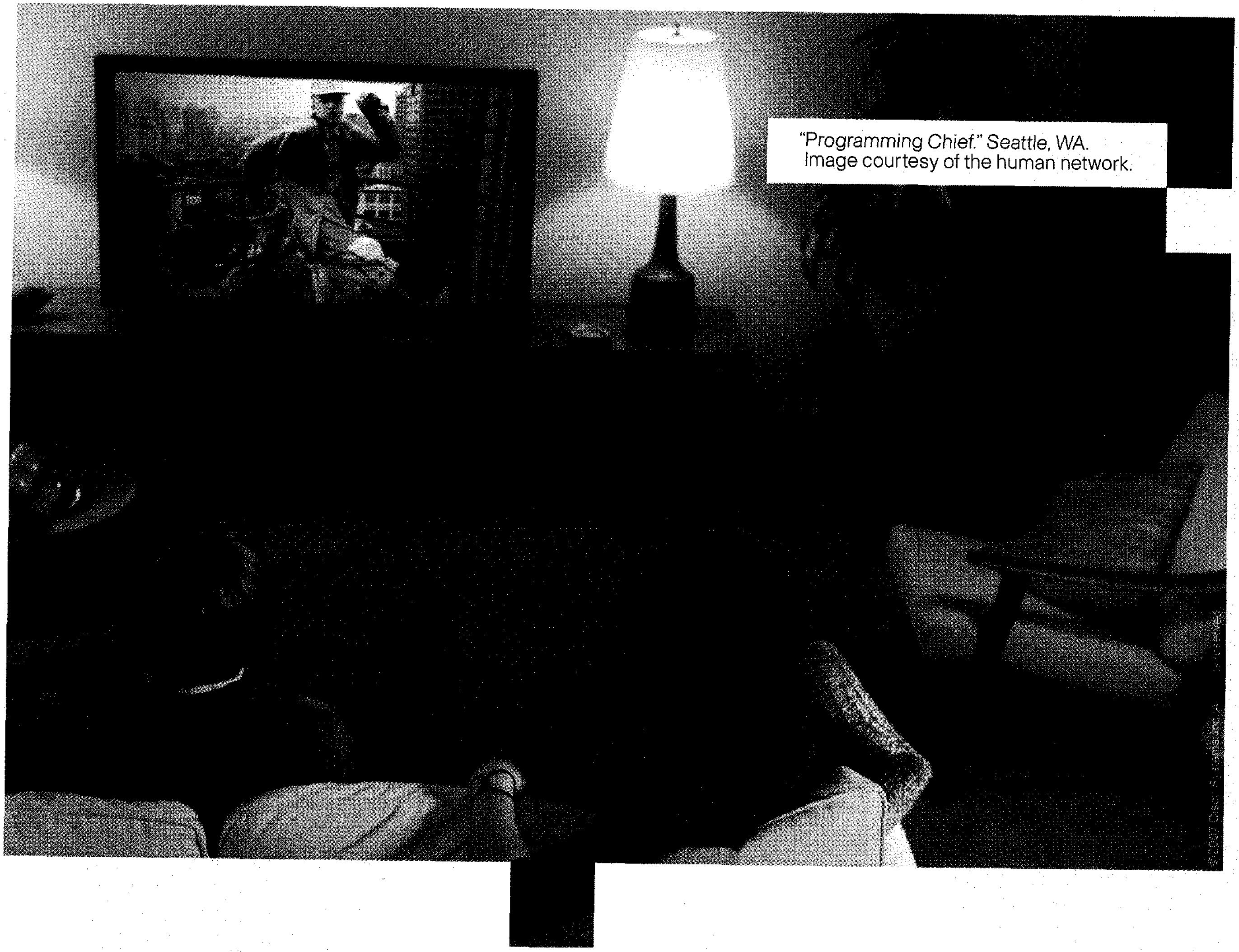
The task that morning was to carve the top of a new guitar. Parker began with a thick board of Adirondack spruce—flat on the bottom and peaked down the middle like a roof—and placed it in what he called his "duplicating machine." This consisted of an electric carver and a dummy stylus, running along the same steel beam. The carver moved back and forth over the spruce, while the stylus ran over an arched mold that Parker had made. As the stylus rose up and down the mold, the carver moved with it. Strip by strip, the board began to assume the shape of a gentle arch. "It's like mowing a lawn!" Parker shouted, over the low roar of the machinery.

A guitar isn't an especially hard instrument to build—"Try a harpsichord," Parker said—but it leaves little room for error. The mechanism is simple: six strings, stretched taut across an open chamber, vibrate when struck. This sets the top moving, amplifying the vibrations, turning the guitar into a pump that pushes sound waves out through the sound hole. The strings alone make almost no sound, so everything depends on the wood's resonance. There's no bow to keep the notes from dying, no mouthpiece or bellows to sustain them. The player makes the smallest of gestures—"You whack the string and that's it," Parker said—and hopes the guitar will turn them into music.

To resonate well, the wood has to be thin. To withstand the strings' tension, it has to be strong. Things don't always work out. Even if the neck doesn't bend, the bridge doesn't pop off, the strings don't buzz, the guitar may respond poorly to playing. Its wood may vibrate well only at certain frequencies, so some strings sound weaker than others. It may have dead spots or "wolf tones" that sound muffled or unpleasant. In some guitars, the neck and body, top and bottom, produce sound waves that are out of phase: their peaks and troughs flatten one another when they collide. In others, the sound builds up, wave on wave. "A good guitar is in agreement with itself," Parker said.

How best to achieve that isn't clear. A cello is a cello, a sousaphone is a sousaphone, but the guitar has yet to find its platonic form. In the three centuries since Antonio Stradivari and Giuseppe Guarneri perfected the violin, the guitar has morphed from a thin-hipped little figure to a plump matron, trading double strings for single strings, in sets of four, five, six, or more. Tricked out in tortoiseshell or mother-of-pearl, it has been good enough for aristocrats and warbling ladies, strumming coyly between verses. When cheaply made, it has been an instrument of the people. "The guitar is no more than a cowbell," the Spanish Inquisitor Don Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco complained in 1611, "so easy to play . . . that there is not a stable lad who is not a musician." That much hasn't changed.

Classical guitars with gut strings finally found their Stradivari in the mid-nineteenth century, in the Spanish luthier Antonio de Torres Jurado, whose designs are still used. But steel strings demanded a stouter structure. Sometime in the eighteen-seventies, a shoe-store clerk in Kalamazoo named Orville Gibson began to wonder why guitars weren't made more like violins. A violin's arched top is inherently stronger than a guitar's flat top. It needs less bracing, so it can vibrate more freely and give a stronger, more focussed tone. Gibson made his first archtop guitars in his spare time, then quit his job and hired staff as orders increased. In the nineteen-twenties, a brilliant luthier named Lloyd Loar refined Gibson's designs, adding f-holes and other violinlike touches. By the thirties, archtops were



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the most popular guitars in the country. They were larger and louder than flattops, yet more articulate—perfect for fleet-fingered jazz solos that could cut through a blare of horns. They gave chords a ringing punch and bass runs a penetrating snap: Maybelle Carter played an archtop on early country tunes like "Wildwood Flower."

To a luthier in the thirties, archtops must have seemed like the capstone of guitar development. Then magnetic pickups came along and the instruments changed again. An amplified guitar can't be too resonant or it will squeal with feedback. Fender solved this problem by giving electric guitars solid bodies; Martin kept most of its flattops purely acoustic; Gibson's archtops fell somewhere in between. Some were made with dull, laminated tops; others had holes cut in them for pickups, or solid blocks of maple running down the center to dampen the sound. "If you had a Martin, a good one, and then picked up a Gibson Super 400, you wouldn't have the slightest idea why anyone would play that," Parker says. "It's gigantic, but it doesn't sound gigantic. Where is the fun in that?" Parker's new guitar was partly an attempt to reclaim that history—to see what archtops might have become if the electric guitar had never been invented. "They sort of became dinosaurs," he says. "They were labelled as the least versatile of all guitars. But in my opinion an archtop properly built is a chameleon. It can do anything."

When Parker had finished with the duplicating machine, the spruce board was a rough arch about a quarter inch thick. He grabbed it with both hands—his fingers were a good knuckle longer than mine—and flexed it like a pizza pan. Guitar tops are made from soft woods, like spruce and cedar, that vibrate easily; their backs and sides are made from hardwoods, like rosewood and maple, that are good at reflecting sound. Parker held the board up to his ear and tapped it with his forefinger. It gave a dull ring. "Hear that?" he said. "It's a minor second." He hummed the two notes of the interval below his breath. Then he picked up a hand plane and went to work, shaving thin curls from the inner surface. "You want it to get excited about playing every note," he said. "At a quarter inch, it won't get excited about playing one."

Over the next two weeks, Parker would plane off another eighth of an inch or more, till the top rang at the faintest touch. It was a perilous process. The thinner the wood, the fuller the sound—Parker's tops are less than half as thick as some luthiers'—but a shaving too many could destroy the top or suddenly dampen it. "The real question is, when do you stop?" he said. Stradivari seems to have carved his violins so the tops and bottoms rang with the same note when tapped—an F below middle C. But Parker had given up on easy prescriptions. "Everyone has a secret recipe," he said. "Everyone is trying to do scratch-for-scratch reproductions of ancient instruments. If you had any guts, you'd make a nice new instrument and let the world beat it up for three hundred years." He lifted the board again, flexed, and tapped. "You don't get there by secrets," he said. "You get there by doing *everything* better."

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Is a flower, too, a welcome home for echoes,
Kisses, and cackles. Cauldron of starlight,
Tincture and blaring cry, whatever brushes
Your senses unlatches a doorway

Scoured by salt, vanishing as you plunder
The coffers of sleep. So you will know
What it means to be utterly free, floating

Without a hope, floating in hope, a medium
Fit for the being you have become, given
The bed you have made, the race you won.

—*Phillis Levin*

Parker came of age in the nineteen-seventies, when guitars were sorely in need of a little idealism. He grew up in Islip, on the South Shore of Long Island, the eldest son of a Methodist minister notably more progressive than his congregation. The Parkers joined the March on Washington, in 1963, and received death threats for taking on a black student pastor. "On the spectrum from Bible thumper to social helper, my father is way on the social-helper side," Parker told me. "No thumping at all." His mother had a master's in religion and education from Columbia and was, if anything, more of an activist. Until she died, two years ago, she had a gold Plymouth plastered with bumper stickers—"My Job Is to Comfort the Disturbed and Disturb the Comfortable"—that Parker now drives. He took me to lunch in it one day. "I wonder if President Bush misses the letters he used to get from Grace K. Parker, Methodist Woman," he said.

After graduating from high school, in 1970, Parker spent the better part of a year at Goddard, an alternative college in northern Vermont. He took a class in furniture-building and made a fretless bass for his brother Alan. But the school's long-haired heyday had passed ("It was after the nude class picture"), and Parker found better furniture-makers elsewhere. Rochester, then as now, was a city full of musicians and craftsmen—the Eastman School of Music and the Rochester Institute of Technology were there. Parker worked at the grandfather-clock factory for two years, then tried his hand at making five-string banjos and kinetic furniture. He took some group guitar lessons, but was never more than a ser-

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[1] Source of all statistics cited: *Progress Report on the Global Plan to Stop Tuberculosis*, StopTB/World Health Organization, 2004.

[2] "America's Most Admired Companies" annual survey, 2007; *FORTUNE* magazine, March 19, 2007.

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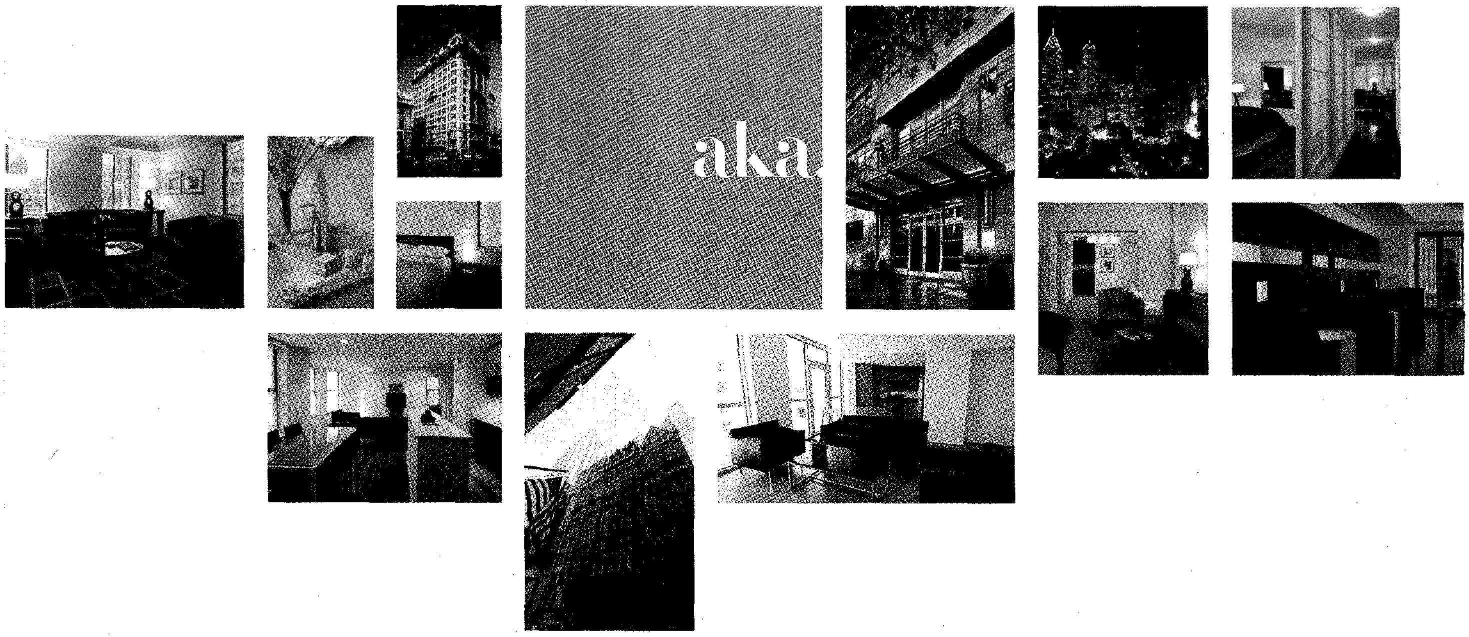

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viceable player, with a strong but sloppy touch. Still, his teacher's guitar entranced him. It was a Gibson archtop from the nineteen-forties.

For a while after that, Parker did nothing but build archtops. He moved back to Long Island and shared a workshop with a lutemaker named Robert Meadow. When he'd finished his first guitar, he brought it by Matt Umanov's store, in Greenwich Village. Umanov told him that it looked like something a hippie had made. So Parker showed it to Jimmy D'Aquisto, the last of the great archtop builders. D'Aquisto lived in a neighboring town on Long Island. A high-school dropout from Brooklyn with the dashing looks of a young Dion, he had apprenticed under John D'Angelico, the other giant of postwar archtop design. (Both men died young, at the age of fifty-nine, D'Angelico of heart failure, in 1964; D'Aquisto of an epileptic seizure, in 1995.) When Parker showed up at his shop, D'Aquisto was used to visits from acolytes. He told Parker that he didn't need an apprentice. Then he told him that his archtop was the best first guitar he'd ever heard. "You're crazy if you stop building," he said.

Parker was twenty-four. He felt as if he'd been knighted, he told me, but he had no clients, no college degree, no market for the archtops he wanted to build. "I couldn't get arrested," he said. What he could do was fix other people's instruments.

In 1979, Parker took a job as a guitar repairman at Stuyvesant Music, on West Forty-eighth Street in Manhattan. The shop was a crossroads for astonishing players of every style—Robert Fripp, Andy Summers, John McLaughlin, Joe Pass—and their guitars needed help. Fender and Gibson had been sold to cost-cutting conglomerates; many of Martin's best builders had died or retired; and standards had fallen across the industry. (The ladies in cat's-eye glasses hadn't done such bad work, after all.) Players would come in with brand-new guitars that were almost unplayable: necks bent, frets uneven, intonation awry. "The Seventies were the Dark Ages," Parker says. "I don't know of any analogue in American manufacturing where quality went so low and people still consumed the product."

The lapse left an opening for a generation of gifted luthiers who were convinced they could do better. Bill Collings in Austin, Jean Larrivée in British Columbia, and others began to dissect old instruments and build new ones by hand, modelling their work on prewar Martins or classical guitars. Parker had other ideas. After four years at Stuyvesant, he quit and moved into his grandfather's house in Seymour, Connecticut. He had few expenses there, a well-equipped workshop, and a steady flow of design and repair jobs. So, for the next eight years, he quietly played guitar scientist. "That was my Bell Labs," he says.

Parker tried to start from scratch—to go back "not quite to the hollow-log era, but almost." He spent days in museums, studying zithers, citterns, and other ancient instruments. He read manuals on making and faking fine violins. ("It is not enough to simply apply a poor finish," one book from the eighteen-hundreds counselled. "First you must apply an excellent finish and then spoil it.") But mostly he thought about lutes.

Lutes were the Stratocasters of the Renaissance—the most popular instruments of their day. They were teardrop-shaped, with fifteen strings or more and a headstock bent perpendicular to the neck. Parker had watched Meadow make them on Long Island and been shocked at how insubstantial they were. Their wood was paper-thin, their necks bolstered by ebony veneers, their bodies held together with parchment. "There was nothing to them," he told me. "But they were the result of an equation. You had a wimpy little string made of intestines, you had to fill a room with sound, and the only way to get that volume and projection was to make them light. It's like an old-fashioned sports car—another great equation that's been forgotten. You have this light little car, this tiny little engine, and it's really fun to drive." What if you made a guitar more like a lute?

One wall of Parker's workshop is lined by a sagging wooden rack, coated in sawdust and filled with guitars: his autobiography in instrument form. When I was there one afternoon, he pulled free one of the thinnest cases and blasted it clean with an air compressor. Then he lifted out a Fly guitar, gleaming black, and set it on my knee.

It looked less like a rifle or a piece of

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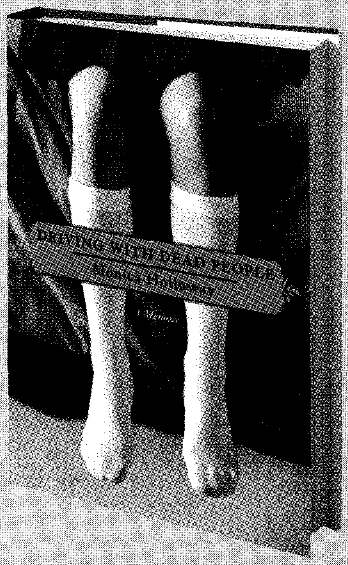

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driftwood than like a modern dancer: shoulders thrown back, thin arms contorted, every excess trimmed away. Its headstock had been whittled to the width of two fingers. Its sides were bent as if poised to leap into the air. When I'd ordered materials for my son's bass, the wood alone had weighed forty pounds uncut. If we were lucky, the finished instrument would weigh between eight and nine pounds—about as much as a Les Paul. The Fly weighed half that, yet its lightness was less startling than its balance. "Let go of a Stratocaster and the headstock hits the floor," Parker liked to say. "Let go of a Les Paul and it hits your ear." The Fly sat quietly on my knee—no hands required—and waited to be played.

Parker's guitar was made with fibreglass and carbon graphite, rather than intestines and parchment, but it followed the lutemaker's basic equation. Its strength lay in its surfaces. The carbon and glass fibres were impregnated with resin and laminated onto a core of spruce, poplar, or basswood. Parker had discovered the technique in the mid-eighties, when he visited a maker of racing sculls with Larry Fishman, the engineer who later designed the Fly's electronics. Within a week, Fishman had made a pickup out of the material and Parker had made a guitar. "It was almost like inventing a new species of wood," Parker said. "You start with the attributes of that wood and then you add stiffness—as much as you want, in any direction you want. It's quite the paintbrush."

The composites helped solve an old luthier's conundrum. The neck of a guitar has to be thin enough to be played comfortably, yet strong enough to keep from bending. It has to resonate with every note, but not so much that its oscillations interfere with the sound waves themselves. "If changing a guitar's nut is like using pink nail polish," Parker said, "then making the neck stiffer is like losing forty-five pounds." Most guitar necks are made of a heavy hardwood—rock maple or mahogany—reinforced with a steel rod, like the spine in a human neck. The Fly was built more like an insect, with an exoskeleton. It was so light and stiff yet resonant that it could sound almost like an acoustic guitar when played with the piezoelectric pickups that Fishman designed for it. Or, when played with its magnetic pickups, it could sound like an electric guitar with exceptional sustain.

Parker and Fishman shopped their prototype around in the late eighties and got startup funding from Korg, a maker of keyboards and synthesizers. In 1990, Parker moved to Boston, set up a factory, and tried to retool his perfectionist methods for mass production. It didn't work. The Fly's innovations made it easier to play but harder to build—carbon fibre was fractious stuff—and Parker, after decades of repairing factory guitars, couldn't compromise on quality. After thirteen years of production delays and budget deficits, personnel problems and hundred-hour weeks—"Never went out. Never took a vacation. Always a knot in my stomach over something"—the company was still in debt. "The whole equation was off," Parker said. "We were building ten-thousand-dollar guitars for twenty-five hundred. I thought that people would naturally gravitate toward them because they played really, really well. But that wasn't the case. The fact is most players don't need something special. They need something proven."

When Washburn Guitars bought the company, in 2003, it moved the factory to Illinois, added more traditional guitars to the Parker line, and had some made in Asia. The line is now modestly profitable, I was told. But the Fly is still too iconoclastic for mass appeal. "People said, 'Why does it have to look so wacky?'" Parker told me that afternoon in his shop. "And I said, 'I can't possibly design something that looks as wacky as the Telecaster and Stratocaster did in the nineteen-fifties. People were in flames about them!'" He reached up and rubbed his eyes. Just talking about those years gave him a headache, he said. Then he took the Fly from my lap and put it back in its case. "I'm still proud of this," he said. "And when I look at it I never think of that stuff. Yeah, sure, I could have made something that looked like a Strat. But, for better or worse, that's just not me. I'm not going to change something a little bit."

"There's gotta be an easier way to get candy from a baby."

It has been thirty years since Parker last devoted himself to archtops, and the market for them hasn't much improved. "It's flat as a fuckin' pancake," Matt Umanov told me, as we were driving along the Hudson one morning. Umanov is fifty-nine now, with grayish-white hair that hangs nearly to his shoulders and an excitable Brooklyn accent. He loves archtops, but says they have limited appeal. "You can pick up a good flattop for five thousand dollars and pretend to be a cowboy—play 'Freight Train' and impress yourself. But you can't pick up an archtop and pretend to be a jazz player. Can't be done."

None of this seems to worry Parker. His new guitar takes much longer to build than a flattop, requires three times as much wood, and sells for thirty thousand dollars—less than the cost of the best new violins, but a fortune compared with most guitars. To succeed, as Parker says, it will have to do everything better. It will have to outperform the best old archtops and be more versatile than the finest flattops. "If you're really brave," a guitarist named John Guth told him, "you'll put the Olive Branch in a room with a D'Angelico and record them both." So Parker went a step further. He invited the best players he knew to bring their favorite guitars to Guth's studio, for a daylong playoff.

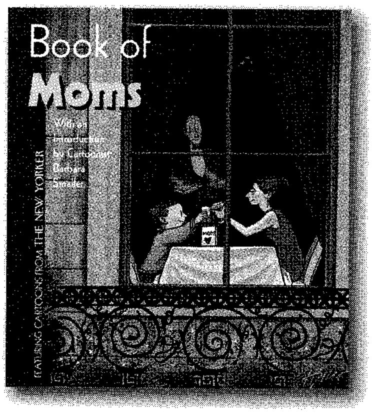
By the time Umanov and I arrived, an impromptu trio had formed. The jazz virtuoso Charlie Hunter was playing a blond D'Angelico from 1940; Joe Selly, of the Klezmer Mountain Boys, was on his 1947 Gibson L-5; and John Hart, a sideman for jazz greats like Clark Terry and Jack McDuff, was playing rhythm on the Olive Branch. Umanov had brought a stunning archtop that D'Aquisto had made for him in 1989, worth more than fifty thousand dollars. T. J. Thompson had even driven down from Concord in an S.U.V. full of prewar Martins and one of his new guitars. He looked around, a little stunned, eyes blinking behind wire frames. "Ken doesn't do anything in a small way," he said. "When I first talked to him about this, I thought it would just be three of us. Now it's a symposium, a summit—an archtop orgy."

The studio was a converted garage at one end of Guth's ranch house. Guitars hung from the walls and leaned against stands, an arm's reach from a bristling rack of preamplifiers. As more instruments came out of cases, an evolutionary lineup seemed to form: flattops on one end, bulky as Neanderthals; archtops in the middle, thinner and more finely sculpted; and then the Olive Branch. Like the Fly, it weighed about half as much as the guitars that came before it—three and a half pounds—but its refinements were more seamless, subcutaneous. The neck hid a thin layer of carbon beneath a veneer of figured koa wood; so did the pick guard and inner lining. The post, barely visible, that propped up the neck was made of a composite covered in gold leaf. There was nothing flashy about it, yet it made even the D'Aquisto look outdated.

Evolution can be overrated. A beautiful sound is a beautiful sound, whether it comes from a hollow log or a digital keyboard. As the players passed the guitars around, some basic differences emerged. The archtops projected their voices—they threw them across the room like Broadway singers—while the flattops enveloped you in them. The throaty bark of the old Gibson archtop was perfect for a standard like "Sweet Sue." But nothing could match Thompson's flattop on a Civil War ballad like "Soldier's Joy"—its ringing sustain seemed to suspend you in the air. Parker's guitar was like a hybrid of the two. It was the loudest guitar in the room, despite being the lightest, and its solo lines sang out more clearly than any others. Depending on where it was picked, close to the fingerboard or down by the bridge, it could play chiming chords, percussive rhythms, or quick-footed arpeggios. "It's like an endless procession of Busby Berkeley girls, disguised as notes," Umanov said. It was an instrument that never seemed to lose its voice, that played evenly up and down the neck—a guitar in agreement with itself.

Afterward, Parker and the players stood around in Guth's kitchen, eating whitefish and egg salad. They told stories about Duke Ellington and Django Reinhardt, Dr. John and Bobby (Blue) Bland, about Bill Monroe biting into his first bagel ("Dang! This is the worst doughnut I ever did eat!"), and about all the great players lost to addiction or indifference. Musical sophistication is no recipe for success, they knew, and most hits are written on slabs of wood. "I don't have a love affair with a guitar," Pete Townshend once said. "I don't polish it after every performance. I *play* the fucking thing."

Before he gave up his workshop on Long Island in the seventies, Parker said, he brought his last guitar to Jimmy D'Aquisto, as he had the first. D'Aquisto looked at it for a long time. He turned it around in his hands, marvelling at its ingenuities—the adjustable tailpiece, the asymmetrical top, the unorthodox bracing—then gave it back to Parker. "A use doesn't exist for this guitar," he told him. "A use would have to be invented for it." Thirty years later, Parker said, he still wasn't sure whether he should have felt encouraged or forewarned. D'Aquisto's answer, most likely, would have been "Both." ◆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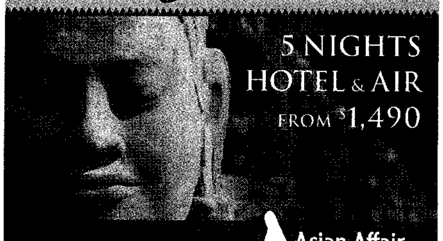
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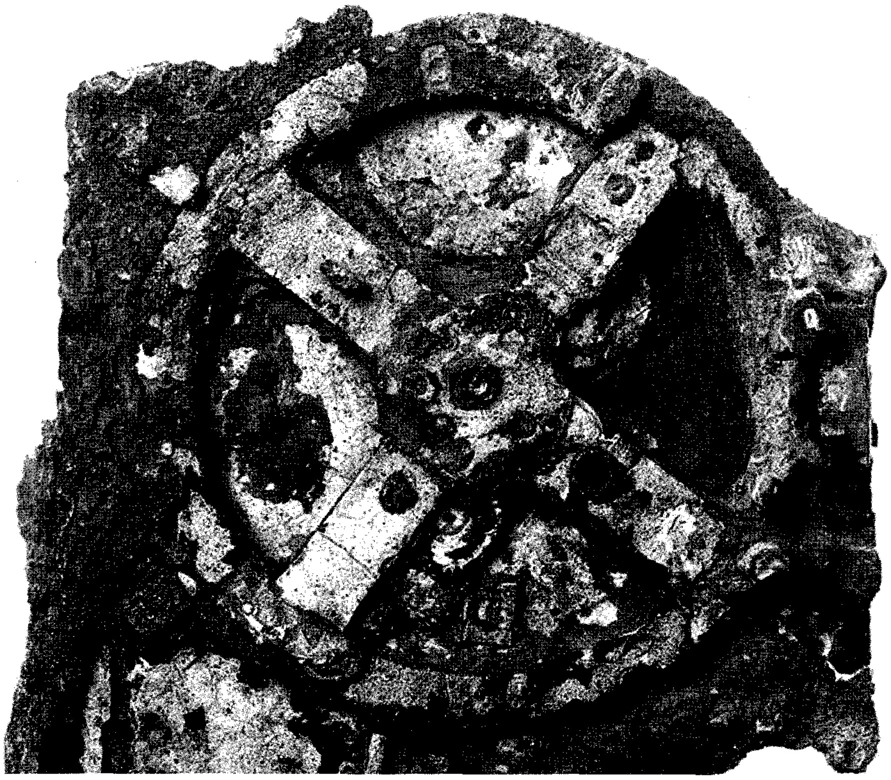
Was the Antikythera Mechanism the world's first computer?

BY JOHN SEABROOK

In October, 2005, a truck pulled up outside the National Archeological Museum in Athens, and workers began unloading an eight-ton X-ray machine that its designer, X-Tek Systems of Great Britain, had dubbed the Bladerunner. Standing just inside the National Museum's basement was Tony Freeth, a sixty-year-old British mathematician and filmmaker, watching as workers in white T-shirts wrestled the Range Rover-size machine through the door and up the ramp into the museum. Freeth was a member of the Antikythera Mechanism Research Project—a multidisciplinary investigation into some fragments of an ancient mechanical device that were found at the turn of the last century after two thousand years in the Aegean Sea, and have long been one of the great mysteries of science.

Freeth, a tall, taciturn man with a deep, rumbling voice, had been a mathematician at Bristol University, taking a Ph.D. in set theory, a branch of mathematical logic. He had drifted away from the academy, however, and spent most of his career making films, many of them with scientific themes. The Antikythera Mechanism, which he had first heard about some five years earlier, had rekindled his undergraduate love of math and logic and problem-solving, and he had all but abandoned his film career in the course of investigating it. He was the latest in a long line of men who have made solving the mystery of the Mechanism their life's work. Another British researcher, Michael Wright, who has studied the Mechanism for more than twenty years, was coincidentally due to arrive in Athens before the Bladerunner had finished its work. But Wright wasn't part of the research project, and his arrival was anticipated with some trepidation.

It had been Freeth's idea to contact X-Tek in the hope of finding a high-resolution, three-dimensional X-ray technology to see inside the fragments of the Mechanism. As it happened, the company was working on a prototype of a CAT-scan machine that would use computer tomography to make 3-D X-rays of the blades inside airplane turbines, for safety inspections. Roger Hadland, X-Tek's owner and chief engineer, was interested in Freeth's proposal, and he and his staff developed new technology for the project.



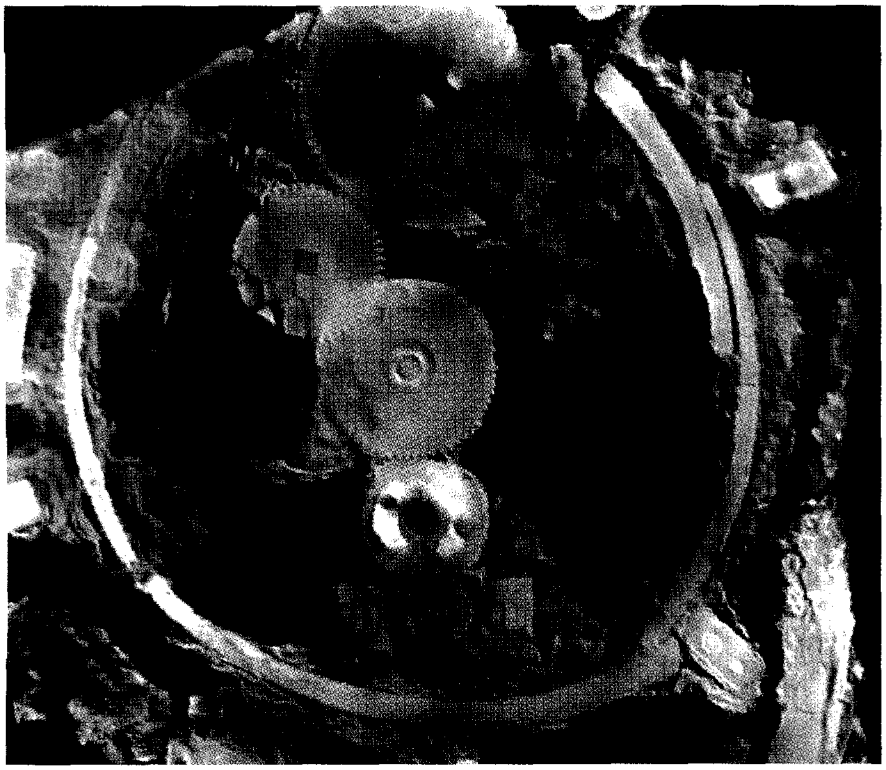
The main part of the Mechanism, found after two thousand years under water.

IMAGES COURTESY ANTIKYTHERA MECHANISM RESEARCH PROJECT; RIGHT, X-TEK SYSTEMS/VOLUME GRAPHICS

After the lead-lined machine was installed inside the museum, technicians spent another day attaching the peripheral equipment. At last, everything was ready. The first piece to be examined, Fragment D, was placed on the Bladerunner's turntable. It was only about an inch and a half around—much smaller than Fragment A, the largest piece, which measures about six and a half inches across—and it looked like just a small greenish rock, or possibly a lump of coral. It was heavily corroded and calcified—the parts of the Mechanism almost indistinguishable from the petrified sea slime that surrounded them. Conservationists couldn't clean off any more of the corroded material without damaging the artifact, and it was hoped that the latest in modern technology would reveal the ancient technology inside.

The Bladerunner began to whirr. As the turntable rotated, an electron gun fired at a tungsten target, which emitted an X-ray beam that passed through the fragment, so that an image was recorded every time the turntable moved a tenth of a degree. A complete three-hundred-and-sixty-degree rotation, resulting in three thousand images or so, required about an hour. Then the computer required another hour to assemble all the images into a 3-D representation of what the fragment looked like on the inside.

As Freeth waited impatiently for the first images to appear on the Bladerunner's monitor, he was trying not to hope for too much, and to place his trust in the skills of the group of academics and technicians who were there with him. Among them, waiting with equal anticipation, were John Seiradakis, a professor of astronomy at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki; Xenophon Moussas, the director of the Astrophysics Laboratory at the University of Athens; and Yanis Bitsakis, a Ph.D. student in physics. (Mike Edmunds, an astrophysicist at Cardiff University, who was the academic leader of the research project, remained in Wales.) "I was just focussed on my relief that this was happening at all, with all the delays of the past four years," Freeth told me. "Honestly, there were times when I thought it would never happen."



X-ray imaging has made many gears and inscriptions newly visible.

One day in the spring of 1900, a party of Greek sponge divers returning from North Africa was forced by a storm to take shelter in the lee of the small island of Antikythera, which lies between Crete and Kythera. After the storm passed, one of the divers, Elias Stadiatis, put on a weighted suit and an airtight helmet that was connected by an air hose to a compressor on the boat, and went looking for giant clams, with which to make a feast that evening.

The bottom of the sea dropped sharply, and the diver followed the underwater cliff to a shelf that was about a hundred and forty feet below the surface. On the other side of the shelf, an abyss fell away into total darkness. Looking around, Stadiatis saw the remains of an ancient shipwreck. Then he had a terrible shock. There were piles of bodies, all in pieces, covering the ledge. He grabbed one of the pieces before surfacing in order to have proof of what he had seen. It turned out to be a bronze arm.

The following autumn, the sponge divers, now working for the Greek government, returned to the site, and over the next ten months they brought up many more pieces of sculpture, both marble and bronze, from the wreck, all of which were taken to the National Museum to be cleaned and reassembled. It was the world's first large-scale underwater archeological excavation. Evidence derived from coins, amphorae, and other items of the cargo eventually allowed researchers to fix a date for the shipwreck: around the first half of the first century B.C., a time when the glorious civilization of ancient Greece was on the wane, following the Roman conquest of the Greek cities. Coins from Pergamum, a Hellenistic city in what is now Turkey, indicated that the ship had made port nearby. The style of the amphorae strongly suggested that the ship had called at the is-

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land of Rhodes, also on the eastern edge of the Hellenistic world, and known for its wealth and its industry. Given the reputed corruption of officials in the provinces of the Roman Empire, it is possible that the ship's cargo had been plundered from Greek temples and villas, and was on its way to adorn the houses of aristocrats in Rome. The sheer weight of the cargo probably contributed to the ship's destruction.

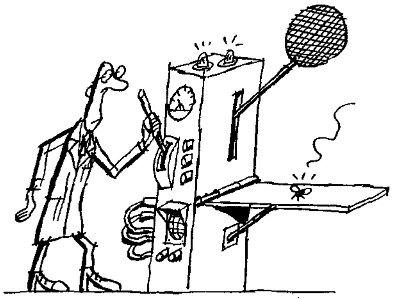
Most of the marble pieces were blackened and pitted from their long immersion in the salt water, but the bronze sculptures, though badly corroded, were salvageable. Although bronze sculptures were common in ancient Greece, only a tiny number have survived (the bronze was often sold as scrap, melted down, and recast, possibly as weaponry), and most of those have been recovered from shipwrecks. Among the works of art that emerged from the waters near Antikythera are the bronze portrait of a bearded philosopher, and the so-called Antikythera Youth, a larger-than-life-size naked young man: a rare specimen of a bronze masterwork, believed to be from the fourth century B.C.

Other artifacts included bronze fittings for wooden furniture, pottery, an oil lamp, and item 15087—a shoebox-size lump of bronze, which appeared to have a wooden exterior. Inside were what seemed to be fused metal pieces, but the bronze was so encrusted with barnacles and calcium that it was difficult to tell what it was. With so much early excitement focussed on the sculptures, the artifact didn't receive much attention at first. But one day in May, 1902, a Greek archeologist named Spyridon Staïs noticed that the wooden exterior had split open, probably as a result of exposure to the air, and that the artifact inside had fallen into several pieces. Looking closely, Staïs saw some inscriptions, in ancient Greek, about two millimetres high, engraved on what looked like a bronze dial. Researchers also noticed precisely cut triangular gear teeth of different sizes. The thing looked like some sort of mechanical clock. But this was impossible, because scientifically precise gearing wasn't believed to have been widely used until the fourteenth century—fourteen hundred years after the ship went down.

The first analyses of what became known as the Antikythera Mechanism followed two main approaches. The archeologists, led by J. N. Svoronos, of the National Museum, thought that the artifact must have been "a kind of astrolabe." A Hellenistic invention, an astrolabe was an astronomical device that was widely known in the Islamic world by the eighth century and in Europe by the early twelfth century. Astrolabes were used to tell the time, and could also determine latitude with reference to the position of the stars; Muslim sailors often used them, in addition, to calculate prayer times and find the direction of Mecca.

However, other researchers, led by the German philologist Albert Rehm, thought that the Mechanism appeared much too complex to be an astrolabe. Rehm suggested that it might possibly be the legendary Sphere of Archimedes, which Cicero had described in the first century B.C. as a kind of mechanical planetarium, capable of reproducing the movement of the sun, the moon, and the five planets that could be seen from Earth without a telescope—Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Still others, acknowledging the artifact's complexity, thought that it must have come from a much later shipwreck, which may have settled on top of the ancient ship (even though the Mechanism had plainly been crushed under the weight of the ship's other cargo). But, in the absence of any overwhelming evidence one way or the other, until the nineteen-fifties the astrolabe theory held sway.

Looking back over the first fifty years of research on the Mechanism, one is struck by the reluctance of modern investigators to credit the ancients with technological skill. The Greeks are thought to have possessed crude wooden gears, which were used to lift heavy building materials, haul up water, and hoist anchors, but historians do not generally credit them with possessing scientifically precise gears—gears cut from metal and arranged into complex "gear trains" capable of carrying motion from one driveshaft to another. Paul Keyser, a software developer at I.B.M. and the author of "Greek Science of the Hellenistic Era," told me recently, "Those scholars who study the history of science tend to focus on science beginning with Copernicus and Galileo and Harvey, and often go so far as to assert that no such thing existed before." It's almost as if we wished to reserve advanced technological accomplishment exclusively for ourselves. Our civilization, while too late to make the fundamental discoveries that the Greeks made in the sciences—Euclidean geometry, trigonometry, and the law of the lever, to name a few—has excelled at using those discoveries to make machines. These are the product and proof of our unique genius, and we're reluctant to share our glory with previous civilizations.



In fact, there is evidence that earlier civilizations were much more technically adept than we imagine they were. As Peter James and Nick Thorpe point out in "Ancient Inventions," published in 1994, some ancient civilizations were aware of natural electric phenomena and the invisible powers of magnetism (though neither concept was understood). The Greeks had a tradition of great inventors, beginning with Archimedes of Syracuse (c. 287-212 B.C.), who, in addition to his famous planetarium, is believed to have invented a terrible clawed device made up of large hooks, submerged in the sea, and attached by a cable to a terrestrial hoist; the device was capable of lifting the bow of a fully loaded warship into the air and smashing it down on the water—the Greeks reportedly used the weapon during the Roman siege of Syracuse around 212 B.C. Philon of Byzantium (who lived around 200 B.C.) made a spring-driven catapult. Heron of Alexandria (who lived around the first century A.D.) was the most ingenious inventor of all. He described the basic principles of steam power, and is said to

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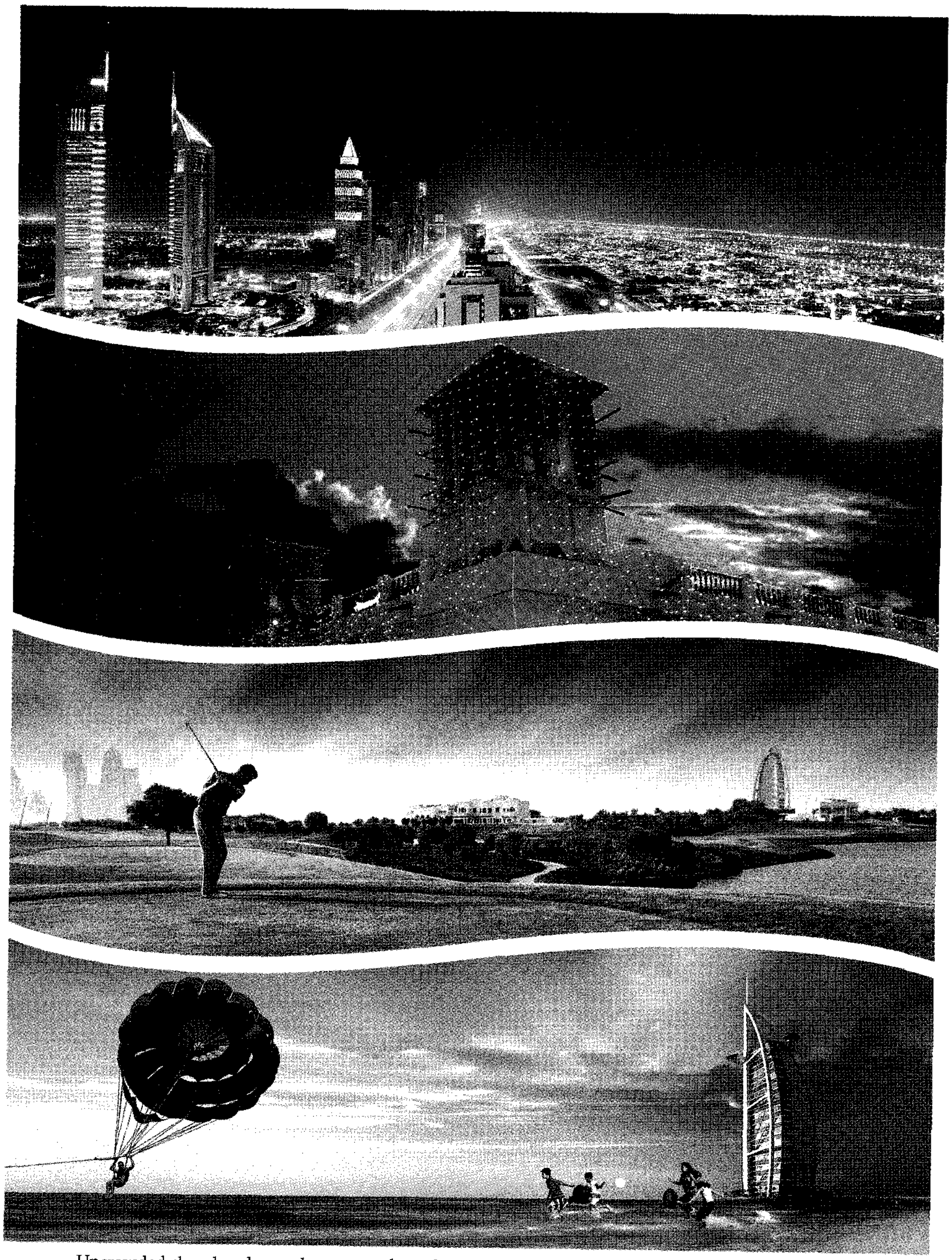

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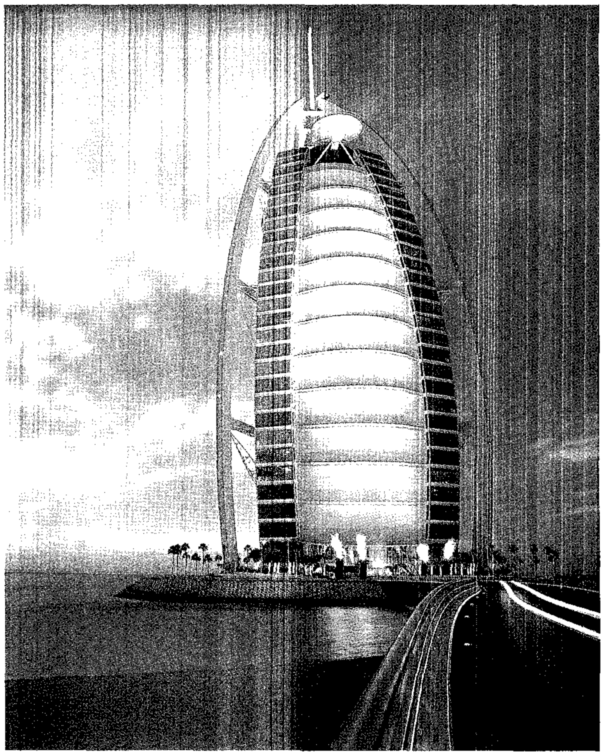
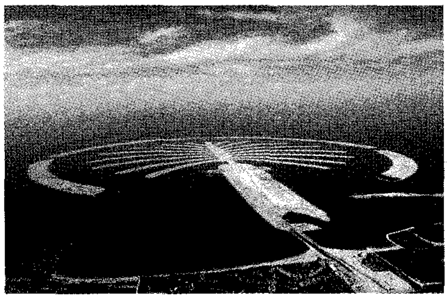


IMAGINATION ON SUPERDRIVE

One of the seven United Arab Emirates located in the southwestern portion of the Arabian Gulf, Dubai is a palette of contrasts. In the last forty years it has transformed itself from a sleepy village of pearl-divers to a gleaming futuristic resort destination heaped in imagination. Yet, camel treks, sand-skiing, and two-hundred-year-old mosques are within close range, and tradition and modernity comfortably coexist. But it's the city-state's architectural magnificence that is among the chief factors making Dubai an innovative standout. Nonpareil luxury landmarks seem endless.

Dominating the Dubai skyline and shaped like a billowing spinnaker of Teflon-coated fiberglass, designer Thomas Wills-Wright's iconic **Burj al-Arab** (Dubai Tower) soars 160 stories up (1,053 feet) from a peninsula in the Gulf, earning it the status of the world's tallest hotel and the only 7-Star property. Its more than two hundred duplex suites have arguably the most opulent interior décor of anywhere in Dubai.



Covering an area of several square miles and including seventeen frond-like isles "growing" out of a vertical stalk of peninsula, **The Palm** (an artificial landmass), can actually be identified from outer space. Two additional Palm developments are underway, one will include homes helping to form the shape of Arabic letters that will spell out two lines of Sheikh Mohammed's poetry for visitors' aerial-reading pleasure.

Sheikh Zayed Road, which less than three decades ago was sparsely developed, is today an eight-lane boulevard with a one-mile stretch of skyscrapers, each from thirty to fifty stories high. The exquisite steel-and-glass **Emirates Towers**, the **World Trade Centre**, and **Dubai International Financial Centre** comprise some of the focal points along the route leading to the U.A.E. capital, Abu Dhabi, two hours away.

Another visionary wonder due to lie at the center of a new downtown complex as early as next year, is the **Burj Dubai**, from Adrian Smith of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (the Chicago-based firm involved in the proposed New York Freedom Tower), which intends to claim the title of world's tallest building. While its final height is still shrouded in secrecy, early reports are that it may surpass twenty-six hundred feet. Its lower thirty-seven floors will house the first Giorgio Armani hotel, which will be decorated by the designer.

Other future-forward architectural ideas on the horizon include a cluster of man-made islands planned to replicate the map of **The World**, which will underscore Dubai's resolve to develop innovative creations. Perhaps the most ambitious project being planned is **Dubailand**, set to occupy a huge area of desert. Six Disneyland-like theme parks, three full-size sports stadiums, a ski resort, more than fifty hotels, the world's largest shopping mall, and a nature reserve are due in three years.

Will wonders never cease?

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BURJ AL-ARAB ATRIUM ©EXPLORER PUBLISHING/VICTOR ROMERO; HOTEL EXTERIOR COURTESY OF BURJ AL-ARAB; THE PALM ©JORGE FERRARI/EPA/CORBIS

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have invented a steam-powered device in which escaping steam caused a sphere with two nozzles to rotate. He also made a mechanical slot machine, a water-powered organ, and machinery for temples and theatres, including automatic swinging doors. He is perhaps best remembered for his automatons—simulations of animals and men, cleverly engineered to sing, blow trumpets, and dance, among other lifelike actions.

Although a book by Heron, "Pneumatica," detailing various of these inventions, has survived, some scholars have dismissed his descriptions as fantasy. They have pointed to the lack of evidence—no trace of any of these marvellous machines has been found. But, as other scholars have pointed out, the lack of archeological evidence isn't really surprising. No doubt, the machines eventually broke down, and, as the know-how faded, there was no one around who could fix them, so they were sold as scrap and recycled. Very few technical drawings or writings remained, because, as Paul Keyser observes, "the texts that survive tend to be the more popular texts—i.e., those that were more often copied—and textbooks, not the research works or the advanced technical ones." Eventually, following the dissolution of the Roman Empire, the technological knowledge possessed by the Greeks disappeared from the West completely.

But, if the Greeks did have greater technological sophistication than we think they did, why didn't they apply it to making more useful things—time- and work-saving machines, for example—instead of elaborate singing automatons? Or is what we consider important about technology—which is, above all, that it is useful—different from what the Greeks considered worthwhile: amusement, enlightenment, delight for its own sake? According to one theory, the Greeks, because they owned slaves, had little incentive to invent labor-saving devices—indeed, they may have found the idea distasteful. Archimedes' claws notwithstanding, there was, as Keyser notes, cultural resistance to making high-tech war machines, because "both the Greeks and the Romans valued individual bravery in war." In any case, in the absence of any obvious practical application for Greek technology, it is easy to believe that it never existed at all.

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In 1958, Derek de Solla Price, a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study, in Princeton, went to Athens to examine the Mechanism. Price's interests fell between traditionally defined disciplines. Born in Britain, he trained as a physicist but later switched fields and became the Avalon Professor of the History of Science at Yale; he is credited with founding Scientometrics, a method of measuring and analyzing the pursuit of science. The study of the Mechanism, which incorporates elements of archeology, astronomy, mathematics, philology, classical history, and mechanical engineering, was ideally suited to a polymath like Price, and it consumed the rest of his life.

Price believed that the Mechanism was an ancient "computer," which could be used to calculate astronomical events in the near or distant future: the next full moon, for example. He realized that the inscriptions on the large dial were calendrical markings indicating months, days, and the signs of the zodiac, and postulated that there must have been pointers, now missing, that represented the sun and the moon and possibly the planets, and that these pointers moved around the dial, indicating the position of the heavenly bodies at different times.

Price set about proving these theories, basing his deductions on the fundamental properties of gearing. Gears work by transmitting power through rotational motion, and by realizing mathematical relationships between toothed gear wheels. The Mechanism concentrates on the latter aspect. Price seems to have assumed that the largest gear in the artifact, which is clearly visible in Fragment A, was tied to the movement of the sun—one rotation equalled one solar year. If another gear, representing the moon, was driven by the solar gear, then the ratio of wheels in this gear train must have been designed to match the Greeks' idea of the moon's movements. By counting the number of teeth in each gear, you could calculate the gear ratios, and, by comparing those ratios to astronomical cycles, you can figure out which gears represented which movements.

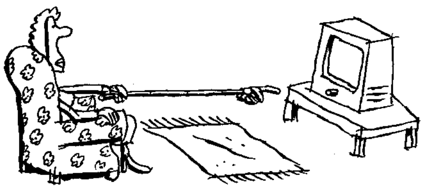
However, because only a few of the gears appear at the surface of the Mechanism, and because many of the gear teeth are missing, Price had to develop methods for estimating total numbers from partial tooth counts. Finally, in 1971, he and a Greek radiographer, Dr. C. Karakalos, were permitted to make the first X-rays of the Mechanism, and these two-dimensional images showed almost all the remaining gear teeth. Price developed a schematic drawing of a hypothetical reconstruction of the internal workings of the Mechanism. In 1974, Price published his research in the form of a seventy-page monograph titled "Gears from the Greeks." He had written, "Nothing like this instrument is preserved elsewhere. Nothing comparable to it is known from any ancient scientific text or literary allusion. On the contrary, from all that we know of science and technology in the Hellenistic Age we should have felt that such a device could not exist."

Price expected his work on the Mechanism to change the history of technology. The Mechanism "requires us to completely rethink our attitudes toward ancient Greek technology," he wrote, and later added, "It must surely rank as one of the greatest mechanical inventions of all time." Price also pointed out that the Mechanism cannot have been the only one of its kind; no technology this sophisticated could have appeared suddenly, fully realized. Not only did the Mechanism demonstrate that our concept of ancient technology was fundamentally incomplete; it also contradicted the neo-Darwinian concept of technical progress in general as a gradual evolution toward ever greater complexity (technological history being the last refuge of the nineteenth-century belief in progress)—an idea firmly embedded in A. P. Usher's classic 1929 study, "A History of Mechanical Inventions." As Price writes, it is "a bit frightening to know that just before the fall of their great civilization the ancient Greeks had come so close to our age, not only in their thought, but also in their scientific technology."

But Price's work, though widely reviewed in scholarly journals, did not change the way the history of the ancient world is written. Otto Neugebauer's huge "A History of Ancient Mathematical Astronomy," which came out the year after "Gears," relegates the Mechanism to a single footnote. Scholars and historians may have been reluctant to rewrite the history of technology to include research that had lingering doubts attached to it. Also, Price's book was published at the height of the popularity of "Chariots of the Gods," a 1968 book by the Swiss writer Erich von Däniken, which argued that advanced aliens had seeded the earth with technology, and Price got associated with U.F.O.s and crop circles and other kinds of fringe thinking. Finally, as Paul Keyser told me, "Classical scholarship is very literary, and focusses on texts—such as the writing of Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, or Horace, or it is old-fashioned and historical, and focusses on leaders and battles, through the texts of Herodotus and Thucydides, or it is anthropological-archeological, and focusses on population distributions and suchlike. So when an archeological discovery about ancient technology arrives, it does not fit, because it's new, it's scientific, and it's not a text. Plus, there is only one such device, and unique items tend to worry scholars and scientists, who quite reasonably prefer patterns and larger collections of data." Whatever the reason, as one scholar, Rob Rice, noted in a paper first presented in 1993, "It is neither facile nor uninstructive to remark that the Antikythera mechanism dropped and sank—twice"—once in the sea and once in scholarship.

The National Museum in Athens took no special pains in displaying the lumps of bronze. Item 15087 wasn't much to look at. When the physicist Richard Feynman visited, in 1980, there was little information explaining what the Mechanism was. In a letter to his family, later published in the book "What Do You Care What Other People Think?," the physicist wrote that he found the museum "slightly boring because we have seen so much of that stuff before. Except for one thing: among all those art objects there was one thing so entirely different and strange that it is nearly impossible. It was recovered from the sea in 1900 and is some kind of machine with gear trains, very much like the inside of a modern wind-up alarm clock." When Feynman asked to know more about item 15087, the curators seemed a little disappointed. One said, "Of all the things in the museum, why does he pick out that particular item, what is so special about it?"

For the Greeks, as for other ancient civilizations, astronomy was a vital and practical form of knowledge. The sun and the moon were the basis for calendars by which people marked time. The solar cycle told farmers the best times for sowing and harvesting crops, while the lunar cycle was commonly used as the basis for civic obligations. And, of course, for mariners the stars provided some means of navigating at night.

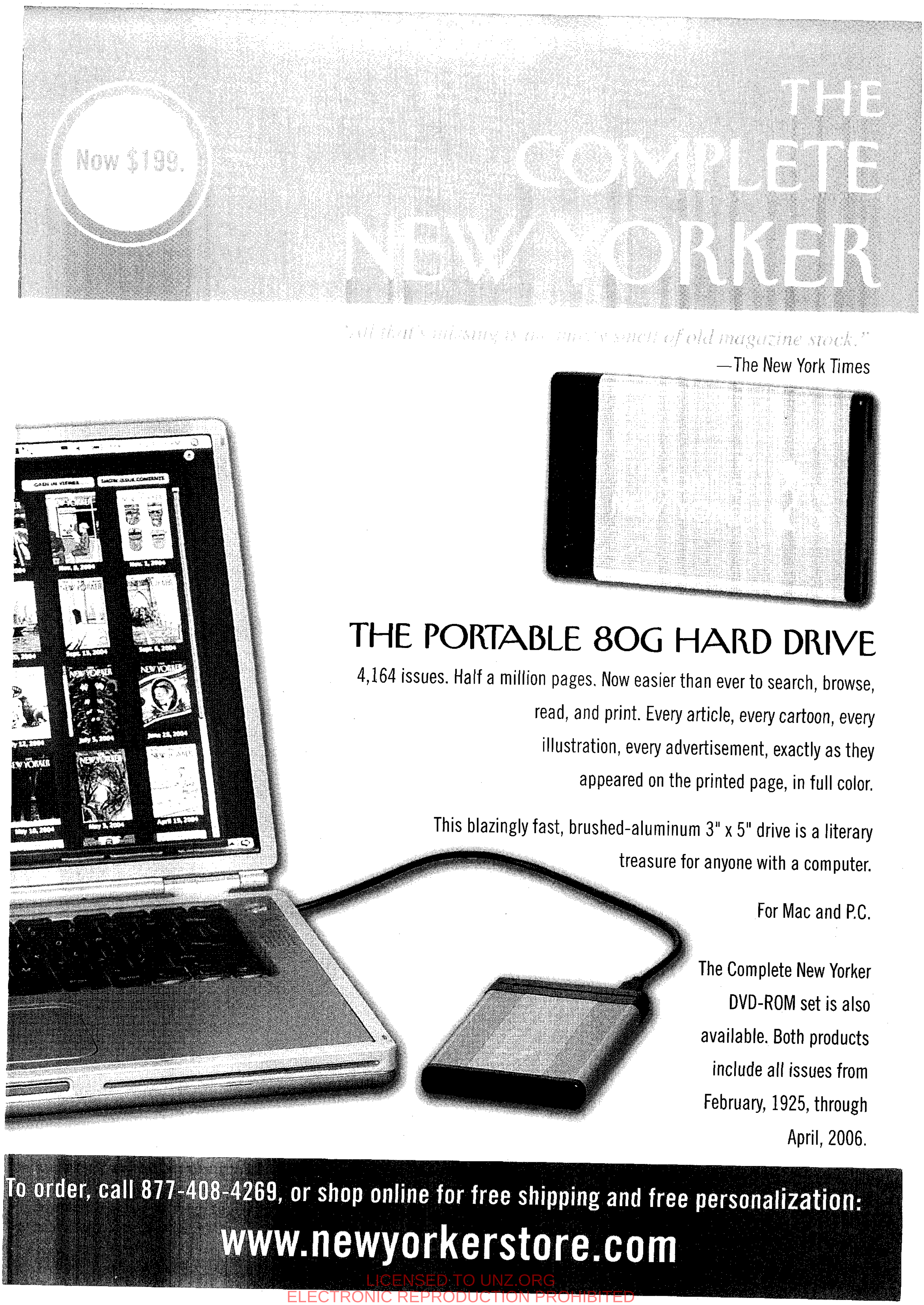


Xenophon Moussas, one of the two Greek astronomers who are part of the research project, is a compact, soft-spoken man. He grew up in Athens, and as a boy, visiting the museum, he often pondered the Mechanism; now as a professor of astrophysics, he uses it to connect with his undergraduate students, for whom ancient technology is often more compelling than ancient theory.

One evening in January, Moussas led me on a memorable walk around the archeological park in central Athens, which includes both the Greek and the Roman agoras. As a quarter moon shone in the clear night sky, illuminating the ruined temples and markets, Moussas narrated the story of how the ancients slowly learned to recognize patterns and serial events in the movements of the stars, and to use them to tell time and to predict future astronomical events. "It was a way of keeping track not of time as we think of it," he told me, "but of the movement of the stars—a deeper time."

For the Greeks, like the Babylonians before them, the year consisted of twelve "lunations," or new-moon-to-new-moon cycles, each of which lasted an average of twenty-nine and a half days. The problem with a lunar calendar is that twelve lunar cycles takes about eleven days less than one solar cycle. That means that if you don't make regular adjustments to the calendar the seasons soon slip out of synch with the months, and after eighteen years or so the summer solstice will occur in December. Finding a system that reconciled the lunar year with the solar year was the great challenge of calendar-making.

Most ancient societies readjusted their calendars by adding a thirteenth, "intercalary" month every three years or so, although methods of calculating the length of these months, and when they should be added, were never precise. Babylonian astronomers hit upon an improvement. They discovered that there are two hundred and thirty-five lunar months in nineteen years. In other words, if you observe a full moon on April 4th, there will be another full moon in that same place on April 4th



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nineteen years later. This cycle, which eventually came to be known as the Metonic cycle, after the Greek astronomer Meton of Athens, was an extremely useful tool for keeping the lunar calendar and the solar calendar in synch. (The Metonic cycle is still used by the Christian Churches to calculate the correct day for celebrating Easter.) The Babylonians also established what would come to be known as the saros cycle, which is a way of predicting the likely occurrence of eclipses. Babylonian astronomers observed that eighteen years, eleven days, and eight hours after an eclipse a nearly identical eclipse will occur. Eclipses were believed by many ancient societies to be omens that, depending on how they were interpreted, could foretell the future of a monarch, for example, or the outcome of a military campaign.

The Greeks, in turn, discovered the Callippic cycle, which consisted of four Metonic cycles minus one day, and was an even more precise way to reconcile the cycles of the sun and the moon. But the Greeks' real genius was to work out theories to explain these cycles. In particular, they brought the concept of geometry to Babylonian astronomy. As Alexander Jones, a professor of classics at the University of Toronto, put it to me recently, "The Greeks saw the Babylonian formulas in terms of geometry—they saw all these circles all spinning around each other in the sky. And of course this fits in perfectly with the concept of gearworks—the gears are making little orbits." Some Greek inventor must have realized that it was possible to build a simulation of the movements in the heavens by reproducing the cycles with gears.

But who? Price called the inventor simply "some unknown ingenious mechanic." Others have speculated that the inventor was Hipparchus, the greatest of all ancient Greek astronomers. Hipparchus, who is also believed to have invented trigonometry, lived on the island of Rhodes from about 140 to 120 B.C. He detailed a theory to explain the anomalous movements of the moon, which appears to change speed during its orbit of the Earth. Hipparchus is also thought to have founded a school on Rhodes that was maintained after his death by Posidonius, with whom Cicero studied in 79 B.C. In one of his letters, Cicero mentions a device "recently constructed by our friend Posidonius," which sounds very like the Mechanism, and "which at each revolution reproduces the same motions of the sun, the moon, and the five planets that take place in the heavens every day and night."

As Moussas and I headed uphill, toward the Acropolis, he pointed out the spot where Meton's astronomy school and solar observatory had been. On our way back down, we stopped at the famous Tower of the Winds, the now gutted shell of what was the great central clock of ancient Athens. Designed by the renowned astronomer Andronicus of Cyrrhus, it is thought to have been an elaborate water clock on the inside and a sundial on the outside. "But, in light of what we know about the Mechanism," Moussas said, "I am beginning to wonder whether this was a much more complicated clock than we think."

When Derek Price died, of a heart attack, in 1983, his work on the Mechanism was unfinished. Although his fundamental insights about the device were sound, he hadn't figured out all the details, nor had he succeeded in producing a working model that was correct in all aspects.

That year, in London, a Lebanese man walked into the Science Museum, on Exhibition Road, with an ancient geared mechanism wrapped in a handkerchief in his pocket. Michael Wright, one of the curators of mechanical engineering, was summoned to examine the artifact, which was in four main fragments. The man said that he'd bought the artifact in a street market in Beirut several weeks earlier. The Science Museum eventually bought it from him, and Wright and a colleague, J. Field, showed that it was a geared sundial calendar that displayed the positions of the sun and the moon in the zodiac. Wright also built a reconstruction of the sundial. The style of lettering on the dial dated the device to the sixth century A.D., making it the second-oldest geared device ever found, after the Antikythera Mechanism.

In addition to his job as a curator, Wright helped to maintain the old clocks exhibited in the museum. Among them was a replica of the oldest clock that we have a clear account of, constructed in the early fourteenth century by Richard of Wallingford, the Abbot of St. Albans. It was a fantastic astronomical device called the Albion ("All-by-One"). Another reconstruction was of a famous planetarium and clock built by Giovanni de' Dondi, of Padua, in the mid-fourteenth century, known as the Astrarium. Like many students of mechanical history, Wright had noted this odd upwelling of clockwork in Europe, appearing in several places at around the same time. He was familiar with the theory that many of the elements of clockwork were known to the ancients. With the decline of the West, goes this theory, technical expertise passed to the Islamic world, just as many of the Greek texts were translated into Arabic and therefore preserved from loss or destruction. In the ninth century, the Banu Musa brothers, in Baghdad, published the "Book of Ingenious Devices," which detailed many geared mechanical contrivances, and the tenth-century philosopher and astronomer al-Biruni (973-1048) describes a Box of the Moon—a mechanical lunisolar calendar that used eight gearwheels. The more Wright looked into these old Islamic texts, the more convinced he became that the ancient Greeks' knowledge of gearing had been kept alive in the Islamic world and reintroduced to the West, probably by Arabs in thirteenth-century Spain.

In the course of this research, Wright became intensely interested in the Antikythera Mechanism. Upon studying Price's account closely, he realized that Price had made several fundamental errors in the gearing. "I could see right away that Price's reconstruction doesn't explain what we can see," he told me. "The man who made the Mechanism made no mistakes. He went straight to what he wanted, in the simplest way possible." Wright resolved to complete Price's work, and to build a working model of the Mechanism.

Whereas Price worked mainly on an academic level, approaching the Mechanism from the perspective of mathematical and astronomical theory, Wright drew on his vast practical knowledge of arbors, crown wheels,

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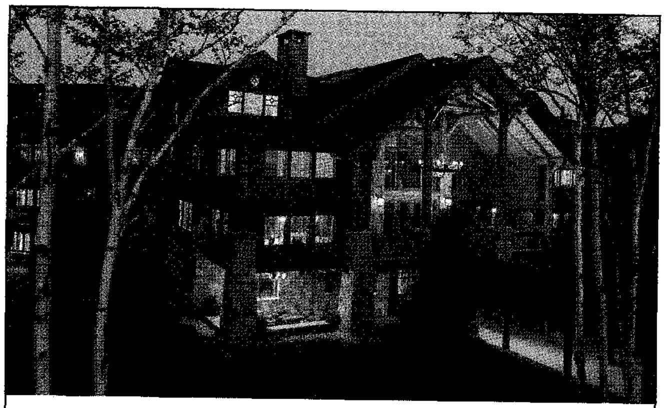

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and other mechanical techniques used in gear-train design. His experience in repairing old grandfather clocks, many of which also have astronomical displays that show the phases of the moon, led him to one of his key insights into the engineering of the Mechanism. He posited that there must have been a revolving ball built in the front dial that indicated the phases of the moon—one hemisphere was black, the other white, and the ball rotated as the moon waxed or waned. Wright also showed how a pin-and-slot construction could be used to model the movement of the moon.

Wright, who is fifty-eight, has a British public-school demeanor, which is generally courteous and hearty and seemingly rational. But he is prey to dark moods, wild, impolitic outbursts, and overcomplicated personal entanglements—"muddles," he calls them. Although he told me, "I really hate confrontation, and antagonism of any kind, even competition," he consistently finds himself in disastrous confrontations with people who should be his allies. Whereas academic researchers are used to collaboration, and to sharing resources and insights, Wright is temperamentally more like a lone inventor, working away in secrecy and solitude until he has found the solution.

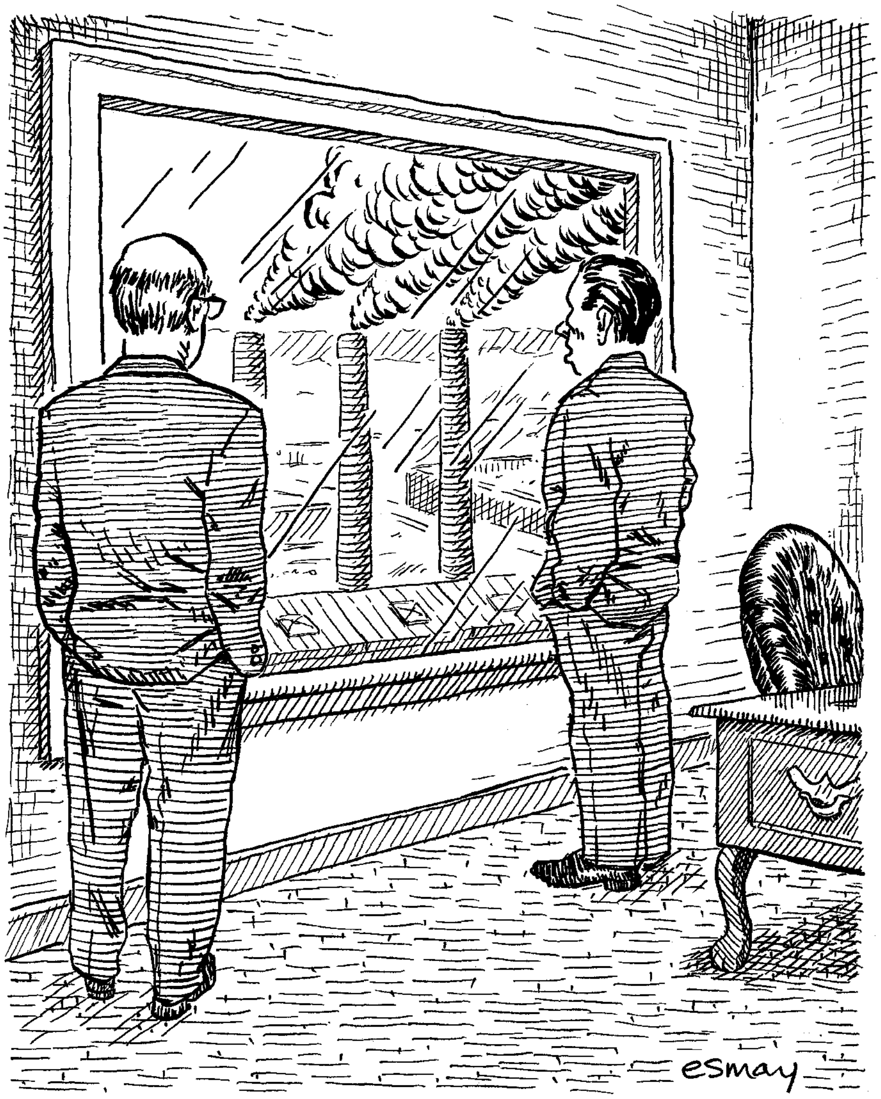
He did have a collaborator once—Allan Bromley, a lecturer in computer science at the University of Sydney and an expert on Charles Babbage, the nineteenth-century British mathematician who was the first to conceive of the programmable computer. Bromley used to come to the Science Museum to study Babbage's papers and drawings and Wright would often lunch with him. In 1990, the pair took new X-rays of the Mechanism, the first since Price's. But Bromley brought the data back to Sydney and would allow Wright to see only small portions of the material. (According to Wright, Bromley confessed "that he had it fixed in his mind that it would be his name, preferably alone, that would be attached to the 'solution.' ")

Meanwhile, Wright got into a muddle with his boss at the Science Museum, an "out-and-out bully" who would allow Wright to work on the Mechanism only in his free time. ("We don't do the ancient world," Wright remembers another colleague saying.) This meant that while Wright's wife would go on holiday with their children, Wright would go to the museum in Athens. (Eventually, after years of this routine, he and his wife divorced.)

By the late nineteen-nineties, Bromley was dying of cancer. Wright went to see him in Sydney, and Bromley turned much of the data over to him. Just as Wright was finally able to work up their findings for publication, however, he learned of the research project and the effort to take a new set of X-rays of the Mechanism. Instead of viewing this new investigation as a potential boon, he saw it as an improper encroachment on his own turf. "There is a long-established unwritten law concerning the study of Greek antiquities, which is that when one researcher has access to the material, any other researcher is denied access until the first has finished," he wrote to me. "In my case, this understanding was swept aside through the machinations of the group." So, when he arrived at the National Museum while the Bladerunner's X-rays were in progress, he was not excited, like the others; he was "angry, tired, and depressed."

The first images of Fragment D to appear on the Bladerunner's monitor were stunning—"so much better than we dared to hope," Freeth told me. "They took your breath way." Inside the corroded rock was what looked like a geared embryo—the incipient bud of an industrial age that remained unborn for a millennium.

Then the team spotted an odd-



"Can't we just dye the smoke green?"

looking inscription. Andrew Ramsey, X-Tek's computer-tomography specialist, who was operating the viewer, zoomed around inside the 3-D representation until he found the right slice. Written on the side of the gear were the letters "M" and "E"—"ME." Was this the maker's mark? Or could "ME" mean "Part 45"? ("ME" is the symbol for forty-five in ancient Greek.) Freeth joked that Mike Edmunds had scratched his initials on the fragment. Others suggested that this particular piece of the Mechanism could have been recycled, and that the "ME" was left over from some earlier device.

Altogether, the team salvaged about a thousand new letters and inscriptions from the Mechanism—doubling the number available to Price. Together with earlier imaging, the new inscriptions support theories that both Price and Wright had advanced. On Fragment E, for example, the group read "235 divisions on the spiral." "I was amazed," Freeth said. "This completely vindicated Price's idea of the Metonic cycle of two hundred and thirty-five lunar months on the upper back dial." They also read words explaining that on the extremity of "the pointer stands a little golden sphere," which probably refers to a representation of the sun on the sun pointer that went around the zodiac dial at the front of the Mechanism. Wright had proposed that the rings of the back dials were made in the form of spirals; the word *eliki*, meaning "spiral," can be seen on Fragment E. On Fragment 22, the number "223" has been observed, pointing to the use of the saros dial as an eclipse indicator.

It was, as Xenophon Moussas put it to me, as if "we had discovered the user's manual, right inside the machine." What had been regarded mainly as an archeological artifact took on a different sort of artifactual status, as an important astronomical text. Very few copies of original astronomical texts remain from the period; most of our knowledge about ancient astronomy comes from other, later astronomers. Little of Hipparchus' writing survives; we rely largely on Ptolemy of Alexandria, who some believe took much of Hipparchus' work and called it his own.

Many of the inscriptions took months to read. Yanis Bitsakis, the Ph.D. student, collaborated with Freeth and the X-Tek team in rendering the X-ray data as computer images, while Agamemnon Tselikas, a leading Greek paleographer, did all the readings and most of the translations. As Bitsakis explained to me, "One of the difficulties in reading the texts was that in ancient Greek there were no spaces between the words, and there are many alternative readings. Also, in many cases the edges of the lines are missing, so we don't know what is continuous text." He and Tselikas would work on the readings through the night, frequently e-mailing and calling other members of the team about new discoveries. Moussas remembers this period, lasting until the spring of 2006, as "the most interesting time in my life." For example, finding the words "sphere" and "cosmos" was extremely moving, Moussas told me: "I felt as though I were communicating with an ancient colleague, through the Mechanism."

One day last month, I paid a visit to Michael Wright, in his book-and-clock-cluttered home, in West London. Wright was reading Xenophon, the Greek historian, in ancient Greek. He put the book down and brought out his model of the Mechanism from a cabinet underneath the stairs. In size, it is startlingly similar to a laptop computer, though a bit thicker. On the front dial, in addition to the pointers for the sun and the moon that Price posited, Wright added pointers for the planets and a separate pointer for the day of the year. On the back dial were two hundred and twenty-three divisions, marking months in the saros cycle; a similar dial above that showed months in the Metonic cycle. The gears were hidden inside a wooden casing, which had a large wooden knob on one side.

Wright was still a little upset about what he considered the sweeping claims that the research group had made when it published its findings, in the November 30, 2006, issue of *Nature*. He almost stayed home from the two-day conference on the Mechanism that the group put on, in early December. In the end, he decided to go, taking his wife, Anne, whom he married in 1998, "to stop me from lifting my knee in some chap's groin."

We went upstairs to Wright's workshop. It was filled with tools and pieces of metal, and the air held the pleasantly acrid scent of machine oil. Scattered across the tables and the floor were clever devices that Wright had fashioned out of gears—clocks, astrolabes, engines of various kinds. I recalled Price's description of the maker of the Mechanism—"some unknown ingenious mechanic"—and wondered if this mysterious maker might have been a bit like Wright, with a workshop similarly cluttered with machines.

Wright took his model apart and showed me how all the gears fitted together. I noticed some writing on a rectangular metal plate in the middle of the mechanism, and Wright told me that it was made of recycled bits of brass left over from some previous incarnation.

"So you think that the letters 'ME'—"

"Precisely," Wright interjected. "I think they must relate to whatever that bit of metal was used for before."

Then Wright put the machine back together and turned the hand knob that drives the solar gear. It engaged with the smaller gears, through the various gear trains, and the pointers began to spin around the dials. The day-of-the-year pointer moved forward at a regular pace, but the lunar and planetary pointers traced eccentric orbits, sometimes reversing course and going backward, just as the planets occasionally appear to do in the night sky. Meanwhile, the pointers on the back dials crept through the months in the saros and Metonic cycles; eclipses came and went. I noticed that as long as he kept turning the knob Wright himself seemed, for once, perfectly unmuddled.

Until this moment, I had, like many others, continued to puzzle over why, if the Greeks were capable of building such a technically sophisticated device, they used that capacity to construct what is essentially a toy—an intellectual amusement. But as I beheld this whirring, whirling symphony of metal, a perfect simulation of a mechanistic and logical universe, I realized that my notions of practicality were foolish and shortsighted. This machine was much more than a toy; it embodied a whole world view, and it must have been, for the ancients, wonderfully reassuring to behold. ♦

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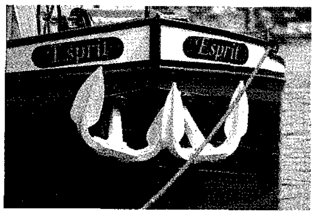

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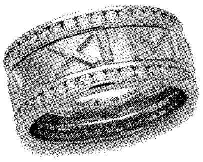

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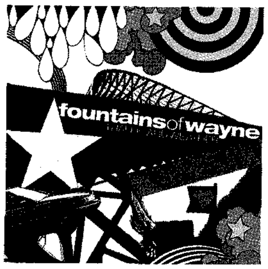

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CRITICAL MASS

Everyone listens to Walter Mossberg.

BY KEN AULETTA

On a blustery, overcast day early this year, P.R. representatives from Sprint and Samsung stopped by the Washington bureau of the *Wall Street Journal* to meet with the columnist Walter S. Mossberg. The agenda was clear: Sprint had a new music phone designed by Samsung, and the group was hoping for a positive reception from a man who has become to technology what Brooks Atkinson once was to the New York theatre—someone whose judgment can ratify years of effort or sink the show. Mossberg's "Personal Technology" column, which anchors the front of the *Journal's* Thursday Marketplace section, is particularly powerful when it comes to judging innovation intended for the consumer market. The opening sentence of his inaugural column, sixteen years ago, was "Personal computers are just too hard to use, and it's not your fault," a sentence that Mossberg has since described as his "mission statement."

Mossberg assesses technology products with the eye of a consumer.

Mossberg's influence was felt almost at once. In 1992, he began championing the Internet service provider America Online for its simplicity, calling it far superior to its competitors, CompuServe and Prodigy; his persistent criticism of Prodigy probably hastened its demise. (Steve Case, AOL's former chairman and C.E.O., says that Mossberg's column "helped move us from the status of just another wannabe to a potential contender.") In 1996, after Mossberg called the handheld Palm Pilot a "breakthrough product"—a comment that Donna Dubinsky, the company's former C.E.O., calls "a huge thing"—its sales surged. In February, Mossberg praised the site blip.tv for the quality of its Web-based TV shows; according to Dina Kaplan, the company's co-founder, the Web site had a thirty-five-per-cent jump in viewers in the first twenty-four hours after the column appeared.

Reviews of digital products and advances have become commonplace. The magazine *PC*, among others, has reviewed products since the eighties, and *Wired* covers technology with the avidity that the Washington *Post* brings to politics. David Pogue has been the *Times'* technology critic since 2000; *Newsweek*, *Business Week*, and *Fortune* all have regular technology critics. But the digital world inevitably democratizes information. A Web site, for instance, may be devoted to a single product. On January 9th, when, at the annual MacWorld conference, Steve Jobs, the C.E.O. of Apple, offered the first glimpse of Apple's forthcoming iPhone, a combination cell phone and music player, the blog Engadget.com had more traffic than the *Times'* Web site.

Few tech columnists, though, write as clearly about the subject as Mossberg. Nor is it likely that any print journalist in America is so richly compensated by his newspaper. Some journalists, such as Thomas L. Friedman, of the *Times*, earn more if one factors in speeches and books, but when, recently, Mossberg signed a four-year contract, two *Journal* sources told me, his annual compensation approached a million dollars. Mossberg refuses to discuss his pay; a friend with knowledge of the negotiations says that "pay has always been an issue at the *Journal*," and that Mossberg doesn't want to be viewed as a "prima donna."

A week after Eric Schmidt became the C.E.O. of Google, six years ago, he went to see Mossberg. "He had just written an article about Google," Schmidt says. "I wanted to get his insights. He was very gracious in saying, 'This is what works. This is what doesn't.' He's seen everything." Schmidt says of him, as one might of a wine writer, "He has a good nose."

I witnessed Mossberg's "nose" for new products in mid-February, when the representatives from Sprint and Samsung arrived to pitch the new music phone. Mossberg is not an especially daunting presence. He is sixty years old, bald and pudgy, and was wearing a purple open-necked shirt with the sleeves rolled up. The delegation included Sprint's communications manager for consumer devices, Michelle Leff Mermelstein; a product manager, Jason Cole; and Samsung's senior public-relations manager, Kim Titus. Mossberg knew Mermelstein better than the others (he considers her one of the best publicists he deals with). They went into an

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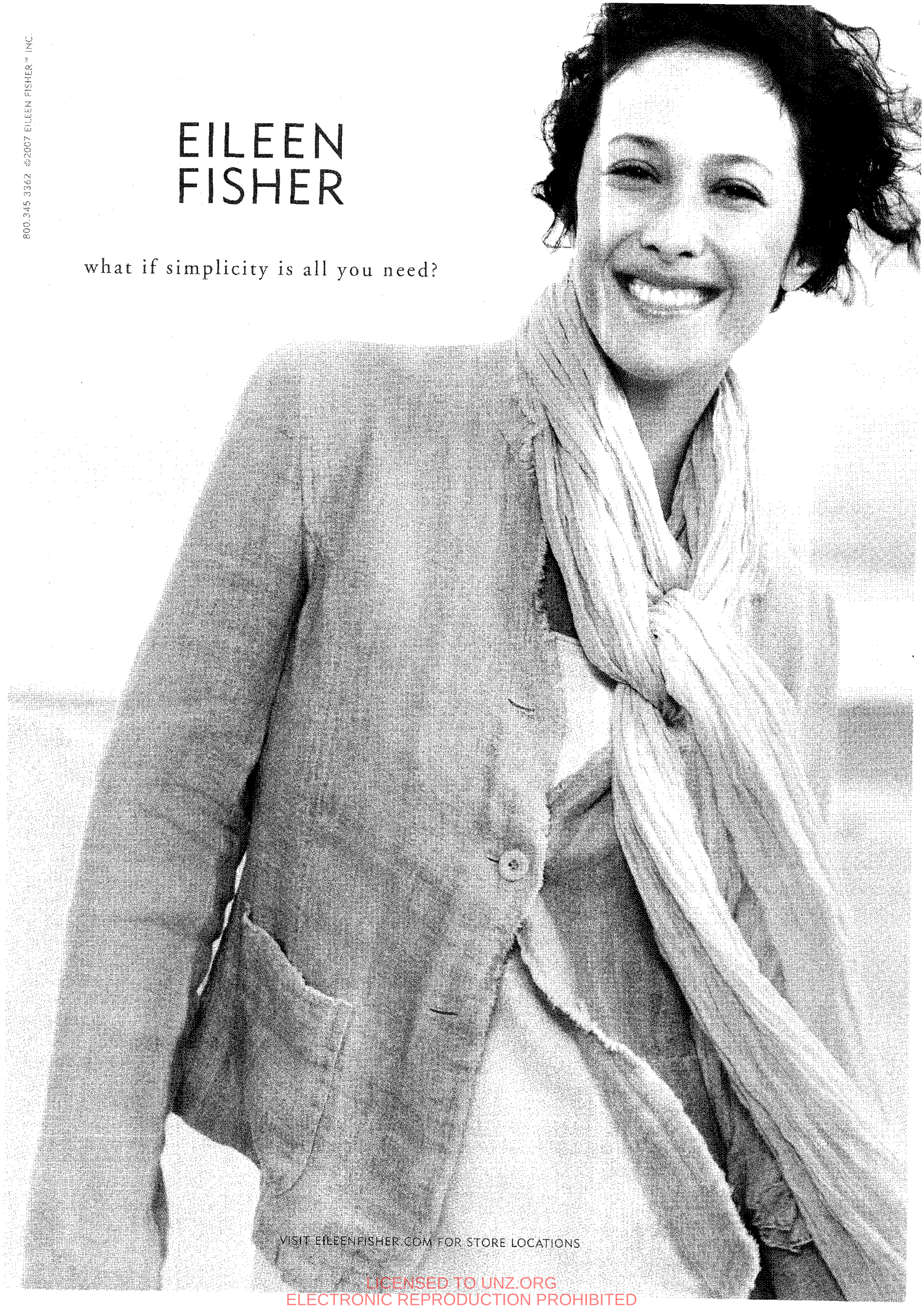

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office that looked, at first glance, like a museum. A bookcase held computers from the dawn of the consumer-computing age: a Timex Sinclair 1000, an Atari 800, a Radio Shack TRS 80 Model 100, a Commodore 64, an Apple IIe, and the first Palm Pilot, among others. Also on view were Boston Red Sox souvenirs, framed Mossberg columns, and a Kremlin press pass from Mossberg's days as a national-security correspondent.

"When we sat down and decided who are we going to show this to first, I said, 'It's got to go to Walt, because we've got to hear the truth,' " Mermelstein said as the meeting began.

"Remember, though, I'm not a consultant," Mossberg replied.

"I think what you're going to see is probably the most exciting out-of-the-box experience of any phone that we have released," Titus said, handing Mossberg a thin black device with two fronts: a phone on one side, with a small screen, and a music player on the other. Mermelstein described its features.

"How much memory for music?" Mossberg asked.

Titus said, "It will come with a sixty-four-megabyte card."

"That's trivially small."

"It is," Titus said, adding, "And it's consistent with our larger up-sell opportunities"—that is, opportunities to buy related products and accessories.

"That may be consistent with your 'up-sell opportunities,' " Mossberg said, "but if I buy an iPod it's got a ton of memory inside it. I can hardly fit any music on this." The iPod Nano has two gigabytes—approximately sixty times the music memory of this device.

"That's a very fair criticism," Mermelstein said, adding that customers could buy an extra two-gigabyte memory card for forty dollars. "What's the battery life?" Mossberg asked.

"Two and a half hours of talk time on the phone."

"That's low."

"It's about average for something that thin."

"And how about for playing music?" Mossberg asked.

"About seven hours," Titus said.

"That's low," Mossberg said. (The iPod Nano gets up to twenty-four hours.)

"There's some other out-of-the-box advantages," she continued, and pulled out a pack to expand battery life—a seventy-dollar value. But Mossberg was skeptical. "It seems to me you had to do this because the battery is weak," he said.

He held up the Samsung and said, "I'm treating this as a real music player, so I have to compare it to an iPod." Then he added that the phone seemed to be "a crippled music player."

"This is a phone first, with a dynamic music capacity," Mermelstein said.

"But the iPhone promises to be both," Mossberg said. And while the Sprint Samsung—called the UpStage—was smaller and cheaper, at a hundred and forty-nine dollars, it costs ninety-nine cents to download a song from Apple, and Sprint was charging two ninety-nine.

"We will be able to offer a comparable price before the end of the year," Mermelstein said.

"It's really too bad you can't do the ninety-nine cents at the same time you introduce the UpStage," Mossberg said.

I wondered why these visitors hoped for a Mossberg endorsement. He has called the telephone companies "the new Soviet Ministries," because of their insistence on controlling their customers, and he has written disparagingly about many of their products. (When, last August, a music phone called the Chocolate was introduced by Verizon, Mossberg informed readers that it was "burdened by a ham-handed user interface and other failings that would get its designers fired at Apple.") And why were P.R. people rather than product designers making the pitch? As Mossberg inspected the phone, he asked his visitors when the phone was to launch. April 1st, he was told.

"What if I wanted to do the first review?"

"We'd love that," Mermelstein said. "I'd love to give you the first review, because I know that, of all the reviewers, you'd be the most fair." She said that they planned to exhibit the UpStage at an electronics show in late March.

"I'm not promising you a puff piece," Mossberg said. "A phone with two sides, two functions, is quite interesting. I'm not sure how well you've integrated it all, developed it all. But I like to bring to readers things where people take a risk and do something different." When, he asked, could he get the UpStage to work with and test? Early March, he was told.

"If I could just pick your brain: What do you think of the candy-bar style?" Mermelstein asked.

"I have nothing against the candy-bar phones," Mossberg said. There are three types of phones—flip and slide phones, which hide the keys, and a candy bar, where all the features are displayed on one plane.

Afterward, Mermelstein said, "Hearing from Walt helps me position the phone. He handles phones from all the different carriers." When I spoke later with Mossberg, he said, "I try not to make snap judgments. I never, ever make conclusions about products I've never tried. But my initial impression is that it's a clever out-of-the-box design, which I like to credit." The question that his test will pose, he added, is the one that consumers will ask: "Is it a supplemental or a real music player?"

Mossberg reviewed the UpStage on March 29th. He wrote that it was far better than the Chocolate, and that "Samsung and Sprint deserve credit for a good try," and for showing "real creativity" in the design—faint praise. Mossberg went on to say that the UpStage "doesn't quite cut it," for the reasons that he had cited in the meeting. He also criticized Sprint for charging too much for songs, and for insisting that consumers who want to synchronize music on the device with a P.C. have to install Sprint music software, rather than using Windows Media Player or Apple iTunes, which most people already use.

The *Journal* may have an élite business audience, but, as Mossberg puts it, "I write my column for the average person." He adds, "That's one of the reasons I write about it as a class war"—techies vs. consumers. Mossberg credits his background for his outlook. His father was a door-to-door salesman of household items like dishes and blankets and, eventually, saved enough to buy a ranch house in the working-class community of Warwick, Rhode Island. His mother stayed home, with three sons: Walt is the eldest; Arthur is a professor at a Rhode Island community college; and Fred is a high-school English teacher. In addition to politics (Moss-

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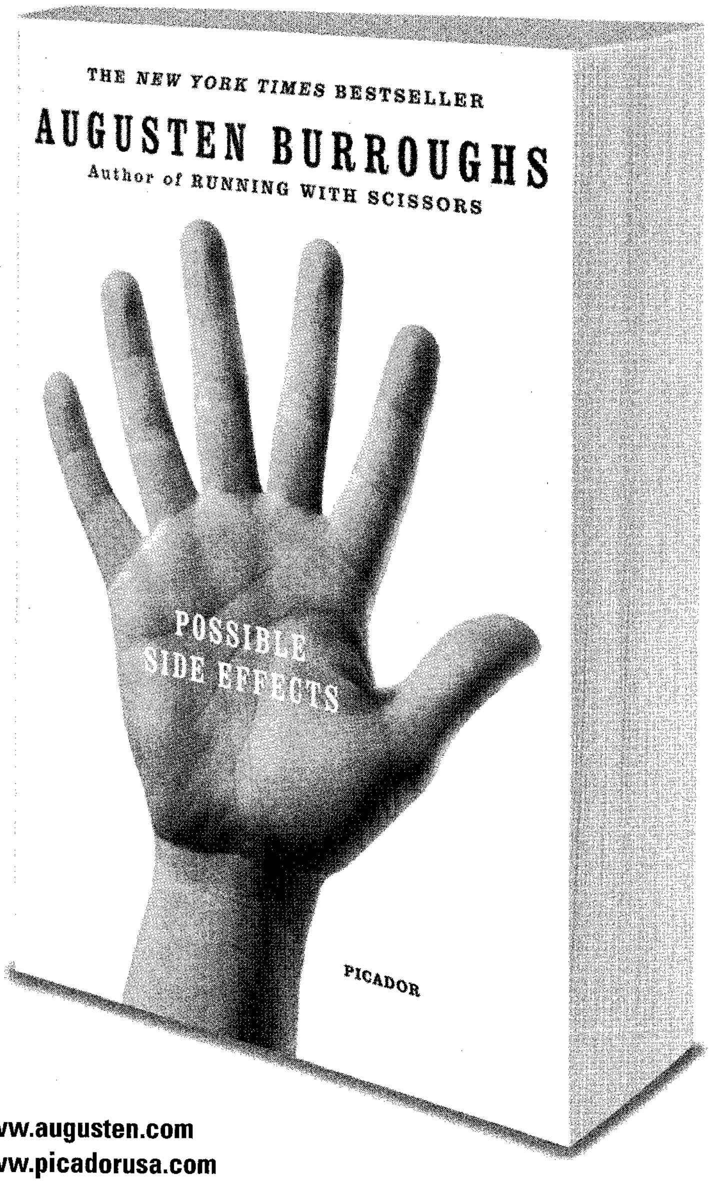
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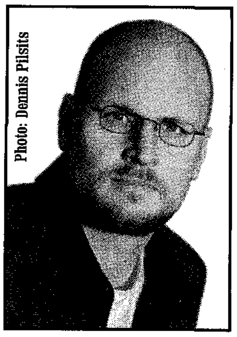

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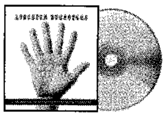
AUGUSTEN BURROUGHS

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berg's father was an F.D.R. Democrat), the fate of the Red Sox was a regular dinner topic, and a picture of Ted Williams on the wall was as prominent as one of John F. Kennedy. Walt went to public school, and in high school he started writing a column with his friend James Woods. By the time Woods gave it up to concentrate on acting, Walt "was mesmerized" by journalism.

Mossberg was the first member of his family to attend college; he chose Brandeis over Brown, believing that it was "less stuffy," and he majored in politics. He joined protest marches against the war in Vietnam, worked for the college newspaper, and was a campus stringer for the *Times;* after his sophomore year, he got a summer job as a reporter at the Providence *Journal.* He had no mechanical ability, but his wife, Edith, whom he met at Brandeis, recalls that when they went to the college library Walt would spend time scanning architecture magazines. Ira Shapiro, a Washington lawyer and a former Clinton White House official, has been Mossberg's best friend since Brandeis, where they roomed together; he remembers Mossberg as someone perpetually curious about an "extraordinary range of things."

Mossberg imagined a newspaper job in Washington. After Edith and Walt married, in the summer of 1969, they attended Columbia—Walt was at the journalism school and Edith at Teachers College. When they graduated, in 1970 (with a high lottery number, he was in little danger of being drafted), the *Wall Street Journal* offered him the national job he sought—in Detroit, not Washington.

Detroit, with its huge automotive industry, was then regarded as a plum assignment, and the bureau included Norman Pearlstine, who eventually became the newspaper's managing editor. Mossberg stayed for three and a half years, and then transferred to Washington as one of two full-time labor reporters. His subsequent assignments included energy, the Pentagon, and a three-and-a-half-year stint as deputy bureau chief; in 1989, he became the national-security correspondent. He was also developing another interest: in 1982, he bought his first computer, a somewhat primitive Timex Sinclair that he hooked up to a black-and-white TV. During the eighties, when the I.B.M. personal computer and then the Mac were born, computers became his hobby.

As a correspondent following Secretary of State James A. Baker, Mossberg found himself virtually living on airplanes. Margaret Tutwiler, then an Assistant Secretary of State, remembers Mossberg in the back of the plane debating with other reporters about whether a Mac was superior to a P.C. Ira Shapiro recalls a time when he didn't hear from his friend for weeks. One day, Shapiro telephoned and said, "What's the matter? We don't talk or see each other anymore."

"Let's go to that new place where they club something to death and cook it for you right there."

"Sorry," Mossberg said. "I'm very into computers."

He was also starting to miss being at home while his children—two sons—were growing up. In April of 1990, he made an appointment to see Pearlstine. He had decided what he wanted to do next: he didn't want to cover national security anymore; he wanted to write a technology column.

Pearlstine liked the idea, despite the problems that he foresaw: the paper had never had an opinion columnist in its news pages, and Mossberg wanted to stay in Washington rather than move to Silicon Valley. "If I live and work among the industry, I will lose my focus as a consumer advocate," he said. In a seven-page, single-spaced prospectus that Mossberg sent to Pearlstine on May 1, 1991, he wrote:

> If it works as I envision it, this column...would be the voice, the champion, of the individual person actually faced with buying and using the core hi-tech devices—the customer whom industry calls the "end user."

When the new job was settled, and Mossberg told Baker and Tutwiler that he was leaving the national-security beat, Baker was baffled. "To this day," Tutwiler told me, "Jim Baker has never owned or operated a computer, or a BlackBerry, or a cell phone."

Mossberg's initial column appeared on October 17, 1991, and quickly became popular. "When we do surveys of readers, we find that he scores very high," Paul Steiger, who became the *Journal's* top editor in 1992, when Pearlstine left the paper, says.

In 1997, Pearlstine, who had become the editor-in-chief of Time Inc., wanted to hire Mossberg for three of the company's magazines and offered to double his salary, of approximately two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. According to two sources with direct knowledge of the negotiations, the *Journal* matched the Time Inc. offer.

At the time of these discussions, Mossberg had a heart attack. He was fifty and, he says, "every male in my family when he reached his early fifties has had a heart attack." Doctors prepared him for a quadruple bypass, and, just days after the operation, Edith Mossberg recalls, "he had to go on the computer and check out the cardiologist and surgeons." The contract negotiations helped raise Mossberg's profile. Later that year, *Newsweek* described him as "arguably the most powerful arbiter of consumer tastes in the computer world today."

Mossberg's current contract—the second he has signed since 1997—covers the "Personal Technology" column, on Thursday, and an accompanying video blog; "Mossberg's Mailbox," also on Thursday, in which he answers readers' questions; "Mossberg Solution," a Wednesday column that he edits but that is now written by Katherine Boehret (a reporter who also works as his assistant); appearances on CNBC to talk about his column; an annual conference, D: All Things Digital, which he and the *Journal* reporter Kara Swisher started in 2003; and a new D Web site, allthingsd.com, that he and Swisher launched in late April.

Scott Kurnit, the founder and former C.E.O. of About.com, says that the success of the D conference is due partly to the clout of the newspaper—"If the *Wall Street Journal* says show up at my conference, you have to show up"—but also to the knowledge and the style of Mossberg and Swisher. For the fifth annual D conference, at the end of May, Mossberg persuaded Steve Jobs and Bill Gates to appear together to answer questions. Jerry Yang, one of the co-founders of Yahoo!, guesses that Gates and Jobs have agreed to participate because in some ways Mossberg is a peer. "He has so much history with so many of us who've been around that you really can talk to him about what's happened in the last ten years," Yang says. "You feel you're talking to someone who knows what he's talking about. And you really have to know what you're talking about to be able to hang with him."

On the tenth anniversary of the column, in 2001, Mossberg wrote, "Taken as a whole, consumer technologies have made startling advances, but they still are not as easy to use as they should be." In a review of Apple's iMac in January, 1999, he asked why computers have "a tedious 'boot-up' process," instead of an on/off switch, and a spaghetti of wires and cables rather than wireless infrared keyboards and printers. Why, he asked in March, are Sony and Toshiba developing rival high-definition video-disk formats, with the Hollywood studios splitting their support? "It would be like having to buy separate TV sets to watch different networks' programs," he wrote. On March 2, 2000, Mossberg urged consumers to boycott the new Sony digital music player (the Music Clip), because it was "designed to satisfy lawyers obsessed with protecting the copyrights of the record labels—including Sony's own label—even at the expense of simplicity and convenience for consumers." He went on, "It treats every user like a potential criminal, and tries to impose new controls on music people paid for years ago."

His reviews of Microsoft products have often been withering. In July, 2001, he wrote of the company's "bully-boy behavior" in forcing families who upgrade to Windows XP to buy a separate copy of the operating system for each P.C. He drew a contrast between the discounts that Microsoft offered its corporate customers and its refusal to do so for average consumers. Microsoft's new Vista operating system, he wrote in January, was "a worthy, but largely unexciting, product," because it was still not easy to use and "hasn't been given nearly as radical an overhaul as Microsoft just applied to its other big product, Office." On June 7, 2001, he attacked Internet Explorer Smart Tags, a feature in an early version of Windows XP that allowed Microsoft's own Web browser to "turn any word on any Web site into a link to Microsoft's own Web sites and services, or to any other sites Microsoft favors," and to do this "without the [site] owner's knowledge or permission." (Three weeks later, a Microsoft representative phoned Mossberg and said the company was abandoning the Smart Tags feature.) Steve Ballmer, Microsoft's C.E.O., told me, "I wouldn't say it's Walt, but I also wouldn't say it had nothing to do with Walt. If Walt had had an opinion that was different from what we were hearing from people, we would not have changed what we were doing."

However, unlike many in Silicon Valley, Mossberg does not seem to have a visceral hostility to Microsoft. When the Justice Department (and later the courts) declared, in 1998, that Microsoft was guilty of monopolistic practices for bundling a free Internet Explorer

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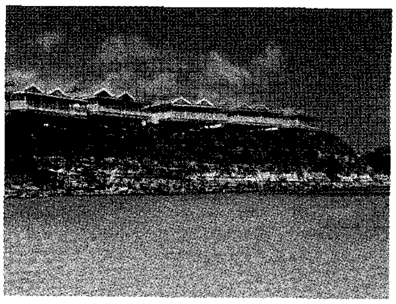

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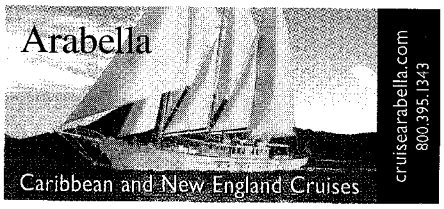

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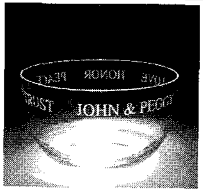

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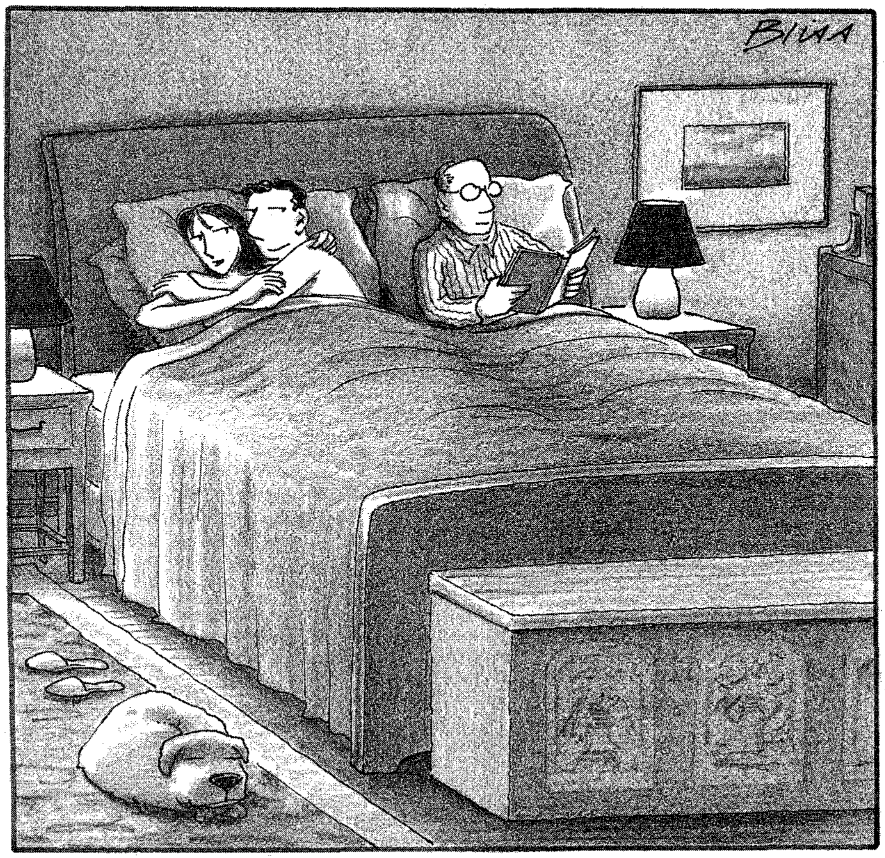

"Damn, you are smooth."

• •

with its operating system, in order to cripple a rival browser from Netscape, Mossberg wrote that a free browser better served consumers. Two years earlier, he said that Microsoft's browser was superior to Netscape's, and he also wrote that Microsoft Word was better than WordPerfect. On October 24, 2002, he abandoned his view that AOL was the best online service, and declared that Microsoft's MSN now offered "an overall cleaner, fresher look and feel."

He has usually favored Apple products, however, because he believes that they are designed for average users. When the iMac G5 desktop was introduced, in 2004, he said in his column, "I am writing these words on the most elegant desktop computer I've ever used, a computer that is not only uncommonly beautiful but fast and powerful, virus-free, and surprisingly affordable." He was just as enthusiastic, six years ago, about the iPod. In January, when he wrote about the "radical and gorgeous" iPhone, he described its "brilliant new user interface; the handsomest email program and Web browser I've ever seen on a phone; a full-blown iPod music and video player built in; and even a cool new voicemail system." But he also took care to say that he had had "too brief an encounter" with it "to write a proper review," and pointed out that it lacked a physical keyboard, "which may put off heavy email users," that it runs on "the relatively slow EDGE cellular data network," and that, at $499, it will be expensive.

Mossberg will often be the first critic to get an advance copy of an Apple product, as in March, when he was the first to receive and write about Apple TV, which allows downloaded movies and programs to be viewed on wide-screen TV sets. Bloggers have taken note of this connection. A comment posted in April on Engadget, by Dermot81, read, "Mossberg may be the biggest Apple fanboy on the face of the planet, so I'd take any review he does of an Apple product with a grain of salt." And Mossberg concedes that he has sometimes gone overboard, as he did on September 28, 2000, when he wrote about the "museum piece" design of Apple's new Power Mac G4 Cube, downplaying its high price and its lack of removable disks for storing or transferring files. He is swayed by "cool" designs. On being asked what column he would most like to take back, Mossberg cited his "gushy review of the Macintosh Cube." He added, "I should have said that it was gorgeous, and a noble effort, but that its design was so radical that it couldn't be offered at a reasonable price and with better specs, and therefore most readers should avoid it." Mossberg did prefer Microsoft's mouse to Apple's, and has pointed out that the iPod Nano scratches too easily.

Mossberg has also been criticized for being too focussed on products rather than on the broader corporate and political issues that affect consumers. Lawrence Lessig, a professor of law at Stanford and the founder of its Center for Internet and Society, says that Mossberg "missed the most basic point" in a piece on copyright protection for digital material, because "nowhere in the piece did he mention 'fair use.'" Yet, Lessig said, "he also wrote an amazing piece about cell phones and how the phone companies were restricting access to the Web. Nobody was thinking about this issue as it applies to the cell phone." Lessig worries that Mossberg is "kind of random" in his writing about these larger issues. There's "a lot more to technology questions than how do you make the machine work," Lessig says. "When I read the piece he wrote about cell phones, I wanted him to write more about this." And when he read the article about digital rights, he says, he thought it best that Mossberg not write more about the subject. Mossberg says that he has made the conscious choice not to write as often as Lessig would like about broader tech issues. But he has scolded Hollywood for resisting the overhaul of copyright laws, the phone companies for resisting products that they don't own, and the digital code that makes it impossible or difficult for consumers to make copies of songs or movies they have bought.

Mossberg, aware of possible conflicts, says that he refuses to make paid or unpaid speeches before companies he covers, owns no tech stocks, and serves on no industry advisory boards. At the same time, the digital companies that

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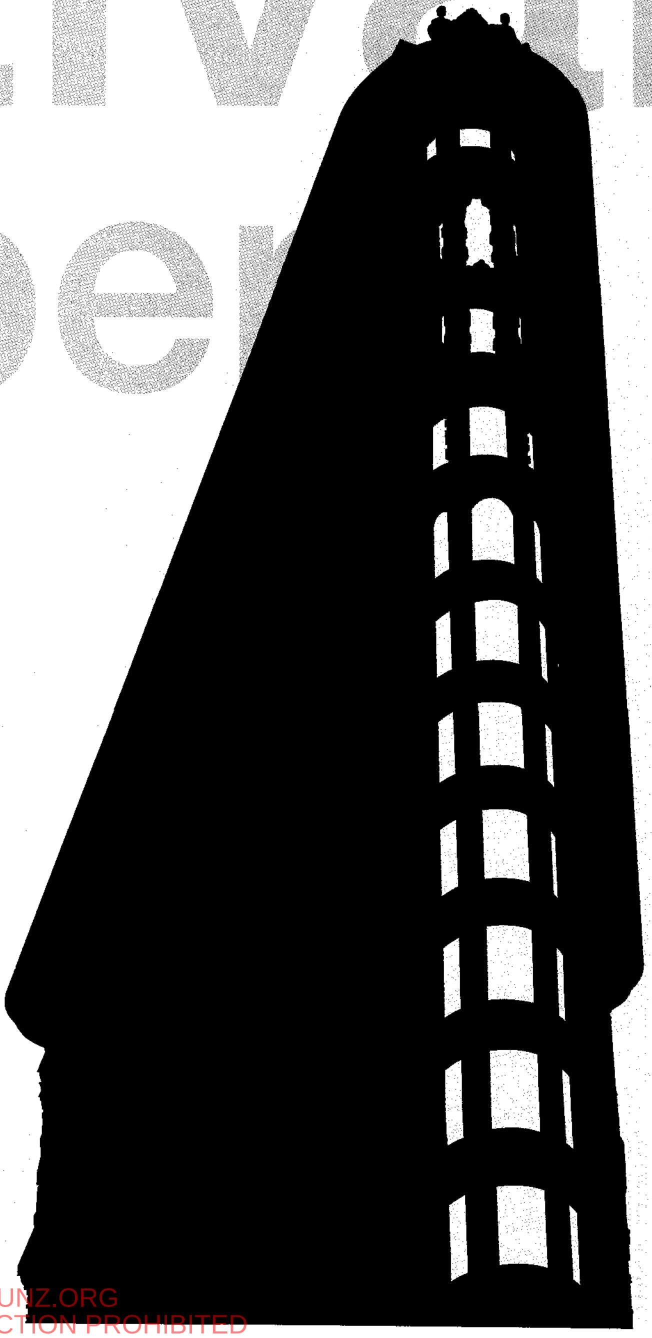


he writes about pay large fees for their executives to attend the D conference, and it is estimated by a knowledgeable source that Mossberg earns about two hundred thousand dollars from ticket sales. And when Mossberg has a meeting in his office companies try to solicit his opinion. Donna Dubinsky, who pitched both the Palm Pilot and the Treo to Mossberg, is now the C.E.O. of Numenta, Inc., which is developing software modelled on human thinking. "We want his input earlier," she said, explaining that long before a product is ready for testing her company says to Mossberg, " 'Hey, give us your feedback.' He almost plays an internal consulting role." She added, "We view it more as a collaborative relationship." She paused, as if realizing that this might embarrass Mossberg, and went on to say that he is not an adviser, and that he always stresses his freedom to criticize. Such background briefings are common and useful, Mossberg says, because they "help me know whether something is new by knowing what others are doing."

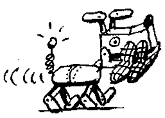
Mossberg is not shy about expressing his opinions. He helped recruit Kara Swisher from the Washington *Post* in late 1996, and encouraged her to move to Silicon Valley. When she and Megan Smith, a Google executive, decided to marry, Swisher told me, her mother "was troubled by the idea of a gay wedding." She and Smith have two children, and she recalls that when she came home with the first baby Mossberg was there, and so was her mother, who "really likes Walt a lot." Swisher went on, "We were having dinner and she was being difficult—she was arguing with me. I was getting really uncomfortable. Walt took her down like I've never seen anybody take anybody down: 'How dare you talk to her like this? This is an important issue and you have to be supportive no matter what as a parent.' My mother was just shocked—he was relentless in not letting her off the hook."

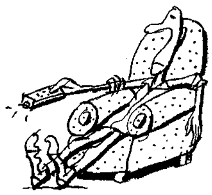
In the future, the most robust competition for critics like Mossberg will come from bloggers and from Web-savvy consumers. According to Technorati, a blog search engine, a hundred and twenty thousand Web logs are created each day, and the number of blogs now exceeds seventy million.

Of the blogs that review products, Engadget, now owned by AOL, has the biggest audience; it gets about eight million unique visitors per month. It also has its own office, six hundred square feet on the top floor of a five-story walkup on Allen Street, on the Lower East Side, which doubles as the apartment of Peter Rojas, its founder. Three P.C.s are on his desk, and one of his windows frames the Empire State Building, several miles uptown. Rojas, who just turned thirty-two, studied at Harvard and got a master's degree in English literature from the University of Sussex, in England; like Mossberg, he started as a print journalist, freelancing for various publications.

Also like Mossberg, Rojas accepts no gifts and no junkets, and returns the products that he tests. "The only asset you have to differentiate yourself from competitors is your credibility," he says. A corner of his apartment is piled with FedEx boxes. Rojas estimates that he has written more than six thousand posts for Engadget, and another four thousand for his previous blog, Gizmodo. A Mossberg column runs about nine hundred words; posts written by Rojas, three full-time employees, and paid freelancers average between fifty and a hundred and fifty words.

With the reviews he wrote for publications, Rojas says, "you kind of had to water it down and assume the audience didn't really care about what you write about and you had to 'hook' them into the article. What I realized about blogging is you're not going to read a blog about gadgets unless you're really interested in gadgets. I assume that our readers know that Sprint and Verizon are CDMA networks, and that T-Mobile and A.T.&T./Cingular are GSM networks." And by "writing up," he adds, "the higher we aim the more it grows, because the audience responds to that." Rojas says that what Mossberg does "is great, because he is able to translate for an audience that may not care, whereas I write for an audience that already cares." Mossberg says that he has respect for Engadget, but, "like so many of the tech or gadget Web sites, it is more of a product-alert system, mostly printing descriptions, albeit with attitude. It really doesn't do hands-on reviews."





Mossberg says that he doesn't worry about becoming out of date as a print journalist. "I've been on the Web from the beginning of the Web," he says. "The good part about writing about technology is that you never run out of ideas, because it's changing so fast. The bad part is that it's changing so fast that there's a million new products and ideas every day and every week." Inevitably, as Steve Ballmer observes, because of the profusion of information many "pulpits will be smaller than they used to be." But he says of Mossberg, with whom he has sometimes tangled over Microsoft product reviews, "He is the most influential writer on technology from an end-user perspective—let me say, for older people." Jason Calacanis, who has launched a number of blogs, including Engadget, says that bloggers sometimes refer to Mossberg as "Grandpa," but he adds, "He's obviously the most respected man in technology journalism, particularly when it comes to products." Jeff Jarvis, who produces a popular blog called buzzmachine.com, and who is fierce about the democratizing benefits of the Web, says of Mossberg, "He's had a lot of impact, but he has lots of new competition." Jarvis waved his Treo and said that with this handheld device he can link to Treonauts, a blog that is aimed at creating a community of Treo users. Jarvis insists that the old model is fading, not just because of blogs but because companies are creating "social networks," so that they can talk with customers directly. "If I were inventing a Mossberg today, I think the role of a journalist like him is to be an enabler of that community," he says.

What differentiates Mossberg from most bloggers, according to Marissa Mayer, a Google vice-president who focusses in particular on the experience of consumers, is that what he writes "is all based on his use of the product"—he's not racing to be first. Her colleague Eric Schmidt suggests that, while the Internet may yield enormous amounts of information, it is easy to drown in it. So consumers, Schmidt says, "go to brands they trust." He adds, "Walt is a brand." ♦

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BRANSON'S LUCK

The business world's high roller is betting everything on biofuels.

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

Richard Branson likes to pretend that business is his hobby; he sees himself as a modern version of a nineteenth-century British adventurer—Phileas T. Fogg, unbound. Rather than travelling around the world in eighty days, however, he appears to be trying to find eighty ways to do it. In 1986, Branson, the founder of the Virgin Group of companies, crossed the Atlantic in the fastest time ever recorded, on his boat the Virgin Atlantic Challenger II. The next year, the Virgin Atlantic Flyer, history's largest hot-air balloon, became the first to travel the same path. Bad weather and technical glitches forced him to abort several attempts at becoming the first to fly a balloon around the world without stopping. But in 1991 Branson soared over the Pacific Ocean from Japan to the Canadian Arctic, again establishing records while travelling at speeds of more than two hundred miles per hour. Branson may well hold another record: the number of highly publicized near-death experiences. He has been pulled from the sea five times by helicopters (and once from a frozen lake). During one of his attempts to circle the globe, Branson crashed into the Algerian desert. During another, in 1998, the Chinese Air Force threatened to shoot his balloon out of the sky as it crossed the Himalayas. It took Britain's best diplomats to keep him aloft and alive. Not long afterward, he crashed into the Pacific. Branson, who has now bet much of his fortune on developing ecologically benign sources of fuel, was asked recently if his swashbuckling persona wasn't simply an advertisement for his airline, Virgin Atlantic. "The P.R. experts actually have said that as an airline owner the last thing I should be doing is heading off in balloons and boats and crashing into the sea," he replied. "And they have a point. When I went over on the Virgin Atlantic Flyer, our airline took a full-page ad which said something like 'Come on, Richard, there are better ways of crossing the Atlantic.' "

There is luck, and then there is Richard Branson's luck. In 1977, he took an inadvertent spin on a sort of tricycle that had huge wings and an outboard motor—it was called a pterodactyl flying machine. It had been flown only once, but the inventor, a man named Richard Ellis, was seeking investors. He thought immediately of Branson, who saw the machine, jumped on, and started to pedal. Before he knew what was happening, Branson found himself hundreds of feet in the air. He still has no idea how he made it down alive; the next week, Ellis also decided to give it a whirl. He plunged to the ground and died on impact. Branson has even survived a shipwreck. In 1974, he went with his first wife, Kristen Tomassi, to Cozumel, to try and patch up a marriage that had suffered from numerous affairs on both sides. The area has some of the world's best marlin fishing, and one day they and another couple decided to hire a deep-sea boat. Two miles out, a severe storm began to pound the boat; after a frightening hour or so, the wind and rain subsided, but Branson and his wife concluded that they were in the storm's eye. Convinced that the boat could not withstand another attack, they urged the others to try to swim with them to safety. Nobody was willing to join them. "We stripped off to our underwear and the fisherman gave us a plank of wood from the bottom of the boat," Branson recalled. Somehow, despite ten-foot waves, the couple fought their way to shore. Neither the boat nor its occupants were ever seen again.

The adventure didn't save the marriage. Tomassi ran off with the singer Kevin Ayers and moved to Hydra. Branson followed them, but he couldn't win her back. Yet, as he noted in his autobiography, "Losing My Virginity," the marriage may well have failed for an even more fundamental reason. "Kristen and I had a bizarre sexual allergy to each other," he wrote. "Whenever we made love a painful rash spread across me which would take about three weeks to heal. We went to a number of doctors but we never resolved the problem. I even had a circumcision to try to stop the reaction."

Branson leaves the ground as often as possible—on kite boards, parasails, gliders, bungee cords, wind boards, wake boards—and soon, if all goes as planned, he intends to add rocket ships to his repertoire. He also likes to ski, and this winter he took his family to Zermatt. (He and his second wife, Joan, have two children: Holly, a twenty-four-year-old medical student, and Sam, twenty-one, who has recently begun to work with Virgin Media.) On February 23rd, Branson's cell phone rang while they were at dinner. He ignored it. Branson is almost absurdly accessible—he treats his e-mail address like a business card, offering it to anyone who asks (and to many who don't). But, when he goes on a family holiday, he tries to step off the grid. The phone kept ringing, though, and eventually he decided that he had better see who it was. "With most people, when the phone rings at odd hours their first thought is: Oh, I hope the children are all right," Branson told me a few days later. "But, if you happen to have an airline, well, then, there is another call you also fear."

It was indeed bad news, but not from Virgin Atlantic. The trouble was in a different arm of Branson's transportation empire: a nine-carriage Virgin Pendalino train, en route to Glasgow from London's Euston Station, had derailed on a remote hillside in Cumbria with more than a hundred passengers on board. Initial reports were spotty, but the train, travelling at nearly a hundred miles an hour, had slid down an em-

PABLO LOBATO

From the Sex Pistols to cellulosic butanol: "I never thought my life would go in this direction," Richard Branson remarked.

"I can't help but think that things might have turned out differently if we had never met."

bankment and flipped onto its side. Branson drove through the night, reaching Zurich at 6 A.M., just in time to catch the first flight to Manchester. From the airport, he went directly to see passengers and crew members in the hospital. A number of people were seriously injured. He also met with the relatives of the only fatality, an eighty-four-year-old woman. When Branson arrived at the scene of the wreckage, he was astonished by its magnitude. "It was as if somebody had picked up some Dinky Toys and dropped them all over the English countryside," he told me. "It was shocking that anyone at all came out alive. We have transported sixty million people in one form or another since we started Virgin Atlantic. Our airlines have a one-hundred-per-cent safety record. The train company had as well. I'm the sort of person who cries at a happy film," he said, swallowing hard. "I cry at a sad film. . . . Of course, I knew this kind of day would come. I have prepared myself for it. But you can't know in advance of a tragedy how you are going to act. You just can't know."

Reporters were surprised to see Branson at the crash site before the cause had been determined. "It was really the bare minimum one can do in a situation like that," he said. "If my children or family had been in that crash, I would have expected the owner of the train to get there as quickly as possible, find out what was going on, and see how he could help." It soon became clear that track-maintenance workers had failed to secure several bolts at a crucial junction, and National Rail officials acknowledged that they—and not Virgin—were to blame. Police surveying the destruction said that only a "miracle" had prevented greater loss of life. The reason was actually more prosaic: Branson's trains were built with safety specifications drawn from Virgin's experience in the aircraft industry. There were no sharp edges on seats or tables. Not a single window broke, and the coaches remained linked, despite the force of the crash. "The one positive thing that came out of it is that the money we spent on building those trains was well worth it," Branson told me.

That night, Branson led every newscast, which wasn't surprising. His talent for public relations is as well documented as his fetish for personal and financial risk. Together, they have made him one of the richest men in England. Still, rarely has a fatal accident proved so beneficial to any company: Branson called the driver a hero for staying at his post; he also invited the press to tour the factory to see how the manufacturer built safety into each carriage. Virgin e-mailed every customer, explaining what had happened and how the accident would affect schedules, and expressing condolences to the family of the woman who died. "I don't know what other C.E.O. you would have seen rushing to a crash that way," Bernd Schmitt told me. Schmitt is the executive director of the Center on Global Brand Leadership, at Columbia Business School. "He couldn't have planned a better response; other guys would have buried their heads in a spreadsheet. But that is one of the reasons the Virgin brand works as well as it does: Branson doesn't plan these things at all. He just does them."

Virgin ranks among the largest privately owned corporations in Europe. The group has fifty-five thousand employees working in more than two hundred loosely federated companies, which include not just Megastores and airlines—in addition to Virgin Atlantic, there are Virgin Nigeria and the Australian carrier Virgin Blue, as well as a private airline and a helicopter service—but also Virgin Limousines and Limobikes, Virgin Money, Virgin Active (health clubs), and Virgin Games (gambling). There are Virgin companies that sell cosmetics, condoms, comics, picnics, and wine. There is one that owns spas and game preserves, another that arranges balloon trips, and even one called Virgin Brides. In February, Branson, concerned about the future availability of stem cells for children who may one day need them, started Virgin Health Bank, which will store cord blood for use later in life. I once asked Branson to describe how he decides to start a business. "It's just basically what interests me," he said. "When I was younger, we had Virgin Night Clubs. Now we have Virgin Health Clubs." He shrugged. "I guess Virgin Funerals are inevitable."

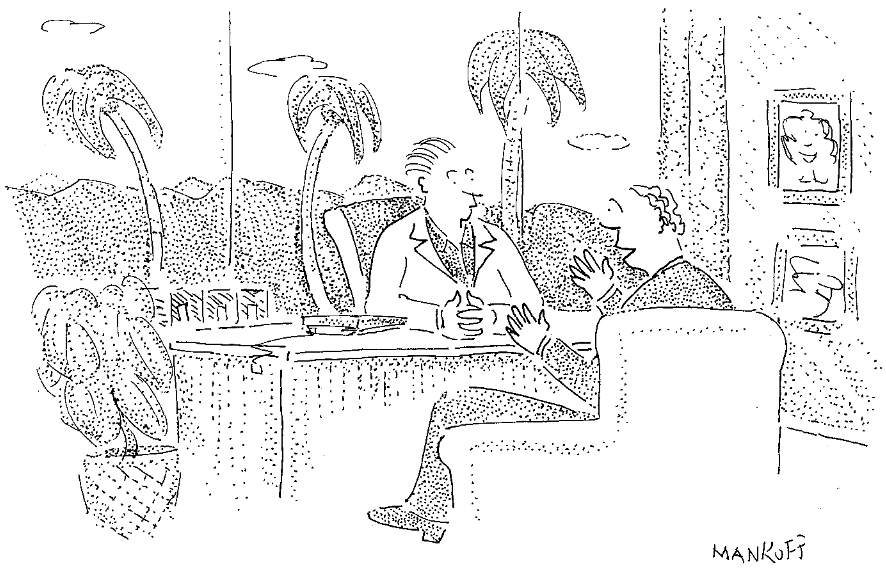
One of Branson's newest companies, Virgin Galactic, plans to become the first to offer regularly scheduled trips into the cosmos. Five vessels are under construction, and Virgin has already collected full fares—roughly two hundred thousand dollars each—from more than a hundred and seventy-five passengers. (One man cashed in two million Virgin Atlantic frequent-flier miles for his seat.) The initial trips, in 2009, will last two and a half hours and take customers sixty-eight miles into space. Eventually, though, Branson envisages rocket travel across the globe—thirty-minute flights, for instance, between New York and Sydney—as well as to space hotels and to the moon. He also has his hands full on earth. His newest conglomerate, Virgin Media, is in a highly public struggle with Rupert Murdoch's Sky Broadcasting Group for control of Britain's digital and cable riches. On February 8th, Branson turned up at Covent Garden, slung the high-end stripper Dita Von Teese over his shoulder, and spirited her off to a hansom cab pulled by two black horses. They arrived at a glass-enclosed living room that had been placed next to the Royal Opera House. There Branson spent the rest of the day promoting the new company by watching only Virgin Media cable programs and communicating with the "outside world" solely through Virgin's mobile phones and Internet connections.

He had come to London for another reason as well. Until about a year ago, Branson thought it unlikely that global warming posed consequential problems for the planet. Then Al Gore paid him a visit and Branson quickly succumbed to his slide show. Branson doesn't dabble. If he is in, he is in all the way. Last September, at Bill Clinton's annual Global Initiative meeting in New York, Branson announced that for the next ten years he will divert all profits from his transportation businesses—mostly airplanes—to develop renewable alternatives to carbon fuels. The pledge should amount to three billion dollars—though Branson (who is worth twice that) says that he will make good on the promise even if profits falter. It is by far the biggest such commitment that has yet been made to fight global warming. In February, with Gore at his side, Branson went further, announcing the Virgin Earth Challenge, the largest philanthropic prize ever offered: twenty-five million dollars to anyone who helps impede climate change without seriously disrupting our way of life. The prize-winner will have to find a way to scrub billions of tons of carbon dioxide from the earth's atmosphere. Many people doubt that it can be done, however, and the announcement elicited dreary predictions about the future of the planet. Branson, ever the optimistic entrepreneur, likened the prize to cash inducements that have led to some of history's most notable achievements in navigation, exploration, and industry. "I believe in our resourcefulness and in our capacity to invent solutions to the problems we have ourselves created," he told me. "We are facing a crisis, but I reject the idea that we have already passed the point of no return."

That afternoon, I met Branson for lunch at the Roof Gardens, in Kensington (another Virgin property). He had hardly slept, and was struggling to make it through the day. At fifty-six, in slightly frayed jeans and an untucked shirt, with a straggly goatee and shaggy blond hair unkempt to perfection, Richard Branson looks like the richest stuntman on earth; but that kind of fun apparently has its limits, and lately he has been talking as if he may have reached them. "The ballooning and boating helped put Virgin on the map on a global basis," he told me. "I certainly regret none of it. But there are quite a lot of important things going on right now on this planet and I don't really want to kill myself in a stupid way. It didn't seem to matter as much when I was young. I had everything to lose and I wasn't reticent to lose it. But if the question is how would I wish to be remembered, I guess I would have to say not as somebody who spent his life in a balloon."

Richard Branson has always lived by Wilde's adage that "there is only one thing worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about." In his case, there is nothing to fear. In 2002, the British Broadcasting Corporation asked its viewers to select history's hundred greatest Britons. He ranked eighty-fifth, comfortably ahead of Sir Walter Raleigh and King Henry II. He even got more votes than Bono, though not as many as Jane Austen or Lawrence of Arabia. The following year, Channel 4 held its own poll, for the hundred "Britons we love to hate." This time, the audience was told to choose only among the living; Branson—along with Tony Blair, Queen Elizabeth II, and David Beckham—was one of the few to make both lists. "My hat is off to Sir Richard Branson," one woman wrote to a local newspaper after the train crash. "I wish that man was running the country." It is a surprisingly common sentiment, and has been for years, but so is this: "Are you kidding me?" one man replied when the letter went up on the newspaper's Web site. "He comes across to me as a publicity-seeking sleaze."

What other knight of the realm would appear, waterskiing, on "Baywatch," or as a guest star on "Friends"? (He and his son, Sam, also turned up as harried passengers in "Casino Royale,"



"It's basically 'The Tragedy of King Lear' but with animated penguins."

cameos they earned by lending the producers a jet. Fittingly, Branson had a small role in the 2004 remake of "Around the World in Eighty Days.") In person, Branson is notably soft-spoken and deferential. In fact, the best way to describe him is shy. Utter the word "Virgin," however, and there doesn't really seem to be anything he won't do. Branson shakes every hand that appears in front of his face, and I once saw him pose for the same picture with a mortified teen-ager four times because the boy's mother couldn't figure out how to work her cell phone. ("I just want to tell you that in Saline County, Kansas, we adore you," she said. "Have you heard of Saline County?" Branson shrugged and said, "Isn't that where the Yellow Brick Road ends up?") Not long ago, Branson invited the MTV show "Cribs" for a tour of Necker Island, his private hideaway in the British Virgin Islands. His American television series on Fox, "The Rebel Billionaire: Branson's Quest for the Best," barely limped through a season—the opening credits played over the theme "Live and Let Die" ("The name is Branson," he says, while the camera flashes to the wing of one of his planes. "Sir Richard Branson.") Naturally, the program was compared to "The Apprentice," whose star, Donald Trump, couldn't resist gloating when it failed. "Richard Branson, your ratings speak very loudly, and you just got fired!" he said, before going on to trash Branson personally. "I don't believe he's a billionaire," Trump, who has often been accused of exaggerating his own fortune, said. "I wish him a lot of luck in the businesses. But, I can tell you, on television he's a total failure." In some respects, Branson is the anti-Trump. There are no monumental Branson Towers in London; in fact, his name appears on no building at all. At Virgin, Branson's nickname is Dr. Yes, largely because he has never been able to bring himself to fire people, and often has trouble saying no to even the most ridiculous and unsolicited ideas.

Branson simply doesn't possess the shame gene that governs so much of upper-class British life. He was knighted in 1999, and three years later, as a guest at Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee, he found himself laughing quietly at the irony of his metamorphosis—first hippie entrepreneur, then Thatcher-era yuppie, and, finally, socially conscious leader of Cool Britannia—because he doesn't think he's changed a bit. "I remember being with the Sex Pistols riding down the Thames on a boat in 1977," he said. "And they were singing, 'God save the Queen, her fascist regime,' and everybody getting arrested. Then, twenty-five years later, there I am sitting next to the Queen at Buckingham Palace, having been knighted. And I couldn't help thinking, I wonder if she can remember what I was doing on the day of her Silver Jubilee."

The Queen may have warmed to Branson, but much of the rest of the Wellington-boot crowd has not. They consider him "common" and—even more horrific—eager to earn money. Yet Branson's popularity is such that when Apple Computer ran its "Think Different" ads in England his photograph appeared along with those of Einstein and Gandhi as one of the people who shaped the twentieth century. As a man who is both rapaciously capitalistic and intemperately candid, he seems to belong more in Oprah's world than in Churchill's. "There are some things about the British that obviously have never appealed to me," he said. "I was watching tennis the other day and looking at all those guys in their blazers in the Royal Box. It just made me shiver. I feel more comfortable amongst Americans oftentimes. Britain is changing, but there is still a fairly fuddy-duddy establishment."

Branson was raised in Surrey and educated as a proper, upper-middle-class British boy; he attended Stowe, among whose other graduates—they are called Old Stoics—have been David Niven, Prince Rainier, and Christopher Robin Milne. From an early age, he and his two sisters were taught that the alternative to standing on their own feet would be disaster. "My mother was determined to make us independent," he has written. "When I was four she stopped the car a few miles from our house and made me find my own way home across the fields. My youngest sister Vanessa's earliest memory is being woken up in the dark one January morning because Mum had decided that I should cycle to Bournemouth that day." Branson was eleven and Bournemouth was a fifty-mile ride. "She did things then that if she did them now she would be arrested," Branson told me recently. I asked him if he thought his flamboyance and love of the spotlight were in any way attempts to hold his parents' attention. "I don't think in psychiatric terms," he replied quickly, ending the discussion. He has always been close to his parents and intends, in two years, when his father turns ninety, to accompany him into space.

Branson had no interest in school and was a famously bad student. "Richard is highly intelligent but educationally dyslexic," his longtime lieutenant Will Whitehorn told me. "It has freed him to live by his gut reaction to things, and that has served him well. I was brought up in a more academic environment—to find there was always a reason why something can't happen. Richard hates it when people tell him that. He isn't hamstrung by academic disputes. He finds them tedious." Branson is like a musician who cannot read music but has perfect pitch. He never finished school or attended university; when he left Stowe, his headmaster told him, "You are either going to be a millionaire or going to jail." Branson did both. He opened a health center in the crypt of a church in central London in 1968. Soon he was prosecuted under the 1917 Venereal Diseases Act, which was intended to prevent charlatans from working as doctors. The center dispensed advice and not medicine, however, so the charges were dropped.

His next indictment, under the 1889 Indecent Advertisements Act, was in 1977, when the Sex Pistols released their only album, "Never Mind the Bollocks Here's the Sex Pistols," on the Virgin Records label. " 'Bollocks' was considered an unforgivably rude word," Branson said. The playwright and lawyer John Mortimer successfully defended him by producing an expert witness to demonstrate that the word "bollocks" was derived from an Anglo-Saxon term and could be used to refer to

REMAINDER OF A LIFE

If I were told:
By evening you will die,
so what will you do until then?
I would look at my wristwatch,
I'd drink a glass of juice,
bite an apple,
contemplate at length an ant that has found its food,
then look at my wristwatch.
There'd be time left to shave my beard
and dive in a bath, obsess:
"There must be an adornment for writing,
so let it be a blue garment."
I'd sit until noon alive at my desk
but wouldn't see the trace of color in the words,
white, white, white . . .
I'd prepare my last lunch,
pour wine in two glasses: one for me
and one for the one who will come without appointment,
then I'd take a nap between two dreams.
But my snoring would wake me . . .
so I'd look at my wristwatch:
and there'd be time left for reading.
I'd read a chapter in Dante and half of a *mu'allaqah*
and see how my life goes from me
to the others, but I wouldn't ask who
would fill what's missing in it.
That's it, then?
That's it, that's it.
Then what?
Then I'd comb my hair and throw away the poem . . .
this poem, in the trash,
and put on the latest fashion in Italian shirts,
parade myself in an entourage of Spanish violins,
and walk to the grave!

—*Mahmoud Darwish*

(*Translated, from the Arabic, by Fady Joudah.*)

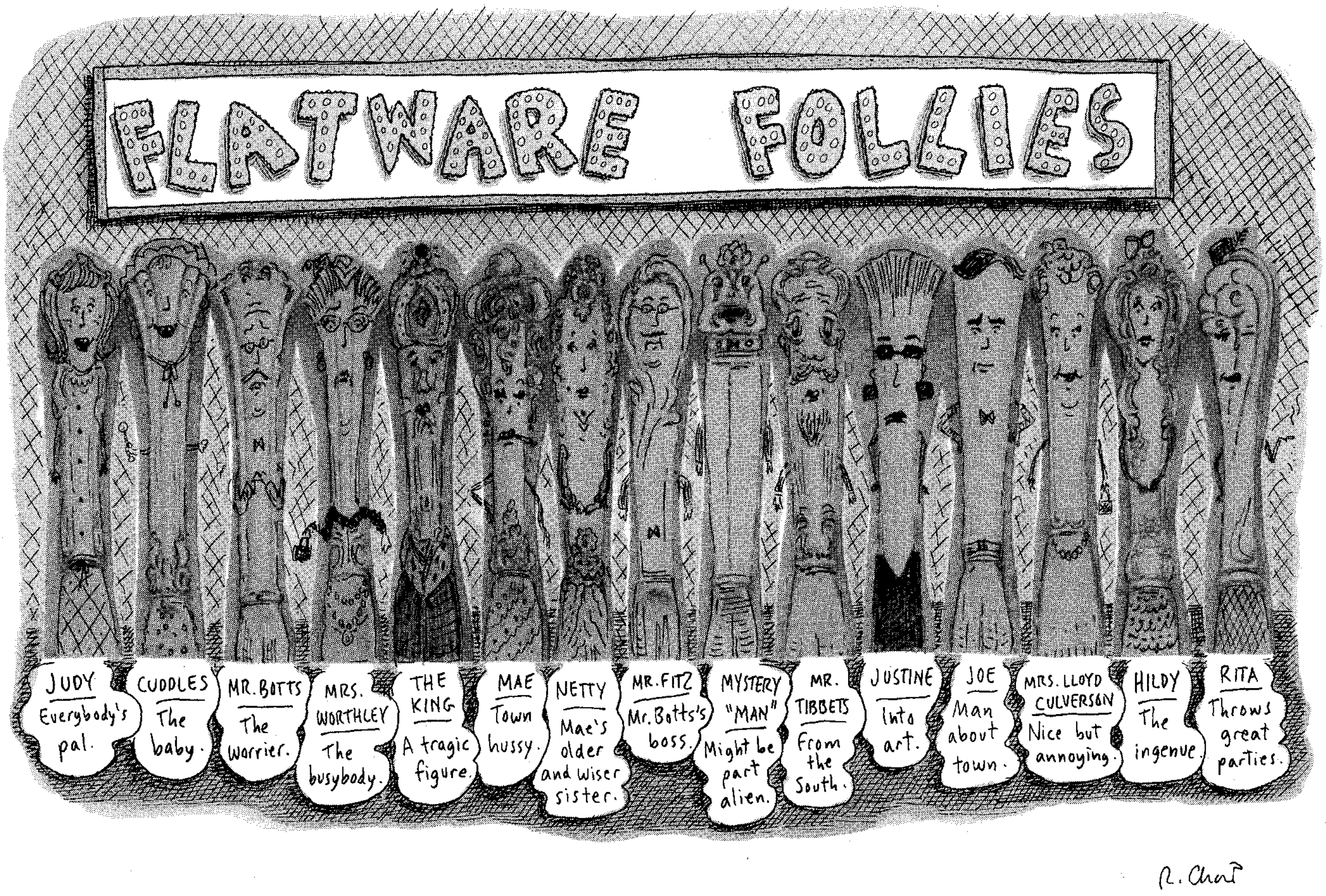
a priest. The witness even turned up in court wearing clerical garb. The judge, to his dismay, was forced to dismiss the charges, saying, "Much as my colleagues and I wholeheartedly deplore the vulgar exploitation of the worst instincts of human nature for the purchases of commercial profits by both you and your company, we must reluctantly find you not guilty."

Branson made his defining fortune through Virgin Records, which he founded as a mail-order retailer in 1970 to raise money for a magazine called *Student*, which he was running. A postal strike threatened to destroy the mail-order business, so he opened a record shop on Oxford Street. It didn't take him long to see that it would make more sense to record music than to buy it, so he built a studio and signed the first Virgin artist, Mike Oldfield. It was a classic piece of Branson luck: the opening song on Oldfield's album, "Tubular Bells," became the theme to "The Exorcist"—which helped it sell five million copies. For a long time, Oldfield earned Virgin more money than all its other acts combined. Relying too heavily on one artist is not much of a business plan, though; the Sex Pistols had been dumped by two labels, and nobody else was willing to sign them. They were repulsive and seemed to spend as much time shooting up and throwing up as they did playing music. But their outrages made news and, oddly, they brought Branson credibility that allowed him to sign people like Steve Winwood, Boy George, and Peter Gabriel.

Branson likes to enter a market controlled by a giant—British Airways, say, or Coke, or Murdoch. Then he presents himself as the hip alternative. (Usually it works, but not always. Virgin Cola, which was launched in 1994, was a disaster, though "we are still No. 1 in Bangladesh," Branson told me recently.) Virgin Atlantic Airways got its start, in part, because Branson was pissed off that a flight he was planning to take to Puerto Rico had been cancelled. After finding a company that would charter a jet for two thousand dollars, he divided the price by the number of seats, borrowed a blackboard, and wrote, "Virgin Airways, $39 single flight to Puerto Rico." As he recalls it, "I walked around the terminal and soon filled every seat on the plane."

Virgin started flying in 1984, on one route with one leased jetliner. "At that time, the airline industry was even worse than it is now," he told me. "You were lucky if you got a piece of warmed-over chicken dumped on your lap. People were treated like cattle; it wasn't necessary or good business." Virgin became the first airline to equip every coach seat with video displays and the first to offer in-flight massage and manicure services. Good service gets you only so far, though. The airline business is brutal—Branson likes to say that the easiest way to become a millionaire is to start as a billionaire and buy an airline. Nonetheless, he is about to start a new one in the U.S.—Virgin America, which will at first serve San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. "When we began, more than twenty years ago, we were competing with thirteen airlines across the Atlantic," he said. "Of those thirteen, twelve have gone into bankruptcy or Chapter 11. There is only British Airways and ourselves flying who have not. A lot of those carriers were enormous: Air Florida, Pan Am. But it shows in the end that most people seek out quality over a really ghastly service, which is what most American airlines provide."

British Airways didn't take kindly to


FLATWARE FOLLIES
JUDY Everybody's pal.
CUDDLES The baby.
MR. BOTTS The worrier.
MRS. WORTHLEY The busybody.
THE KING A tragic figure.
MAE Town hussy.
NETTY Mae's older and wiser sister.
MR. FITZ Mr. Botts's boss.
MYSTERY "MAN" Might be part alien.
MR. TIBBETS From the South.
JUSTINE Into art.
JOE Man about town.
MRS. LLOYD CULVERSON Nice but annoying.
HILDY The ingenue.
RITA Throws great parties.
R. Chast

its new competitor. In 1990, after Branson completed a highly publicized mercy mission to Iraq to bring home hostages of Saddam Hussein, B.A.'s chairman, Lord King, told his top aides to "do something" about Virgin and its chief executive. That edict began an extensive secret war against Branson and Virgin which came to be known as the "dirty tricks" campaign. British Airways lied to Virgin's customers, tampered with its databases, and spread false rumors about Branson himself. Branson sued, and in 1993 B.A., facing certain defeat in court, conceded that it had taken those actions and apologized publicly. Branson received a libel judgment of six hundred and ten thousand pounds, which he distributed among his staff; it became known as the B.A. bonus. The airline was also assessed court fees that ran into the millions; King was forced to retire early, and in disgrace. The incident cemented Virgin's reputation as the little guy always willing to take on Goliaths; it's an image that persists, despite the fact that Virgin stopped being the little guy long ago. (Nor has the bad blood subsided; two weeks ago, when British Airways began showing "Casino Royale" on its flights, the airline removed Branson from his scene, and obscured the fin of a Virgin jet.) "It's a hell of a lot more fun being in the David role," Branson said. The victory came at a cost, though. Many of Branson's other businesses were in financial peril during the nineteen-eighties. Fighting British Airways cost a fortune, so in 1992 Branson sold Virgin Music's record label, publishing arm, and recording studios to Thorn EMI, for a billion dollars.

"It was a very difficult decision," Branson told me. "I had just signed the Rolling Stones, and I had spent a lot of my life trying to do that. Virgin had become the biggest independent record company in the world. It was exploding on all fronts, and these were people who I had been working with since I was a teenager. . . . So it was certainly not something I wanted to do.

"I never have regrets," he continued. "They just don't seem to solve anything. But it is true that when I got this billion-dollar check it wasn't an easy day for me. I had just talked to the staff and explained what was happening and I was running down the street with tears streaming down my face. Then I passed a newspaper kiosk and I saw all the headlines: 'BRANSON SELLS FOR A BILLION.' I remember thinking, Well, this will make an incredibly strange picture if anyone should catch it."

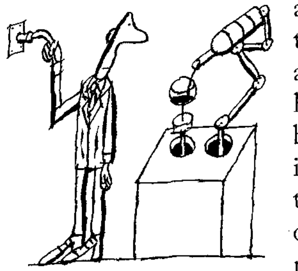
Necker Island sits atop seventy-four acres of rock in the dazzling blue center of the British Virgin Islands. It is surrounded by coral reefs, equipped with every type of water board, kite, and sailboat known to man, and staffed by a professional tennis coach, a chef, a full-time masseuse (who previously had worked for Virgin Atlantic in its Upper Class cabin), yoga instructors, and several dozen other staff members. From the edge of the infinity pool at the Great House, one can gaze across thickets of roses, iris, and rhododendron, into the azure sea and out toward Virgin Gorda. Flamingos strut around the pond. Branson bought Necker in 1972, for a hundred and thirty thousand pounds, when it had nothing on it but a couple of palm trees; over the years, he has transformed the island into the kind of place that any man with a few billion dollars and an acute understanding of pleasure would appreciate. He recently bought its nearest neighbor, Moskito Island, for ten million dollars, and plans, with a combination of windmills, solar energy, and tidal power, to make both islands independent of fuel that burns carbon.

These days, Branson is on Necker more than anywhere else; but when he is not it becomes a resort, available to groups willing to pay forty-six thousand dollars a day. (Spa treatments are not included.) The island is a favorite of celebrities—the long list includes Steven Spielberg, Bill Gates, Kate Moss, and, most famously, Princess Diana—because it affords at least some privacy. (When Diana was there with her sons, the paparazzi assault on the beaches—by land, sea, and air—was so vigorous and intrusive that Branson worked out a deal: one day, the Princess presented herself briefly for a few thousand pictures; then the photographers had to disappear.)

The morning I arrived (by boat, though most guests use the heliport), Branson's wife, Joan, was eating breakfast in the great room with several of her friends. She and Branson have been married for more than seventeen years, and have been companions for thirty. They met in 1976, when her then husband was recording an album in the Virgin Studios. "I make up my mind about someone within thirty seconds of meeting that person," Branson wrote later, "and thus I fell for Joan from the moment I saw her." A reserved but pleasant woman—"sensible, pragmatic Glaswegian" is the phrase Branson almost always uses to describe her—she serves as his principal source of gravity. Once, at a Microsoft conference, Bill Gates asked the crowd if there was even one person left who never used the Internet. Joan had to grab Branson's hand to keep him from raising it. It was Joan who suggested the Virgin Earth Prize.

The great room is lit with ecologically friendly light bulbs that hang from a series of huge, intricately patterned ostrich eggs. The Bransons' children, Holly and Sam, are often with them on the island, and when they are apart Branson speaks to them nearly every day. Branson, who rises early, had just finished a Pilates lesson. "In the last few weeks, I have discovered something that I have always laughed at my friends for doing," he volunteered sheepishly. "Yoga and Pilates. I feel great from it, and if I want to continue to be active when I am ninety I am going to need to rely on both of them." Pilates was the first event of a day that included water sports and a tennis match, and which eventually resembled a mini-Olympics. "Fancy a sail?" he asked after breakfast. It was more of a command than a question, and we were soon racing toward Beef Island in a Hobie Cat, its pontoons slapping the water fiercely as we tried to keep up with two boats carrying friends of his. They quickly moved far ahead of us. Branson looked irritated and then assumed his more common "Hey, it's only rock and roll" expression: "If you are first, it's a race," he explained, as we tried desperately to come about and catch the wind. "If not, it's just sailing." We were forced to abandon our plan to circle a nearby island, because it was getting close to mealtime and Branson wasn't about to miss his traditional British Sunday lunch: roast beef, turnips, greens, and several types of potatoes.

Since his first encounter with Gore, Branson has become obsessed with developing alternative sources of energy. His new venture, Virgin Fuels, is not so much a company as a fund that seeks to invest in projects that will produce environmentally benign fuel. Branson has a pattern with his businesses: he is intensely involved at the beginning, and then, as a leadership team finds its stride, he loosens the reins. This time, though, he shows no sign of inching away. "There are days when we speak three times," Shai Weiss, the company's C.E.O., told me. "Richard definitely believes in delegating, but this is not just another business for him." Virgin Fuels has committed more than four hundred million dollars, for research into the feasibility of using enzymes and genetically modified organisms to produce clean fuels. Branson's initial focus, however, has been on ethanol and butanol. "These technologies are further along than some others, so it makes sense to me to invest in them," he said. "You might as well tick the winning boxes first."



Branson is agnostic about which fuels to support, as long as they are commercially and ecologically viable. Today, of course, his companies—and his fortune—are largely propelled by oil, a finite resource whose availability can only diminish. Government regulations—even in the United States—are also making oil increasingly costly. Biodegradable products like corn and sugar, on the other hand, are renewable sources of energy, and you don't have to get them from Iraq, Russia, or Saudi Arabia. When biofuels are manufactured in sufficient quantities, they should be far cheaper than oil, and Virgin Fuels will benefit directly from any technologies it develops, which means that the company could earn large profits from its investment. "Isn't it surprising to you that there are no biofuels billionaires?" Branson asked, making it clear that he intends to become the first. "If there has ever been a market that needs new products, this is it.

"Let us just assume that somebody does win this prize," he continued. "That could result in us not all having to radically change our lives. Personally, I think there are a lot of aspects of our basic lives that are pretty shitty anyway. Sitting alone in a car with dirty fuel spilling all around you. There must be a better way. The economic sacrifices we are going to have to make to stop global warming are massive, and we must hedge on that. If somebody wins this prize, there is just the possibility that at that stage, and at that stage only"—he paused for a moment—"well, this is a dangerous thing to say, because I don't want anyone to think we don't have to change. But there is enormous economic benefit to the world if we could find a technological solution."

The mere concept of mixing philanthropy with profit infuriates many environmental activists. Branson's motives have been questioned almost as often as his generosity has been praised. "And then Richard Branson came along with his ‘Environmental Windfall’ of $3 billion and his promise to clean up global transport,” Keith Farnish wrote on his Earth Blog not long ago. Farnish described it as a “wonderfully spun P.R. stunt” that will have almost no effect on the emission of greenhouse gases. Tony Juniper, of Friends of the Earth, said, “Richard Branson is not embarking on a program of philanthropy here and giving away money to good causes. What he is doing is reinvesting money from his business into a different kind of business for the future.” In fact, few serious scientists believe that climate change can be addressed in any meaningful way simply by seeking technological solutions; fundamental changes in human behavior will be necessary.

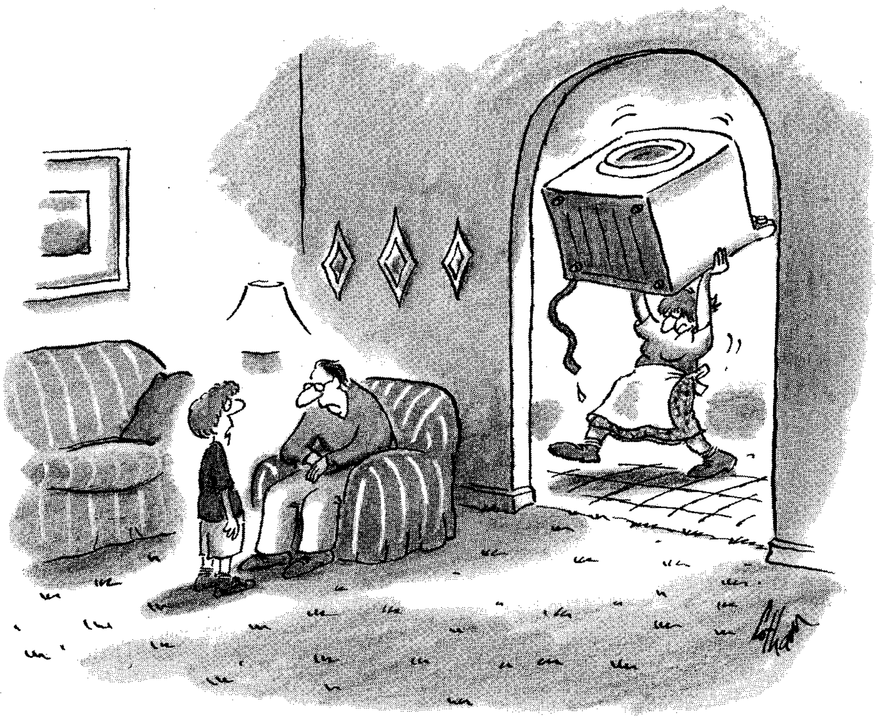
Branson acknowledges the criticisms, but he doesn’t accept a paradigm that holds profit and technology to be incompatible with a cleaner world. “Even if we never burned another gallon of gasoline, the earth would continue to warm for decades,” he pointed out. “So doesn’t that suggest that we ought to at least try to find a way to remove some of the carbon we have already produced?” Ultimately, he believes as a first principle that if a project isn’t commercial it isn’t going to work. “As for why I am giving my money away in this manner, obviously it would have made more sense to make investments in lots of sectors, and not just one,” he said. “But we all do things for different reasons. Sometimes it’s a mixture of what one would consider to be selfless and selfish. A lot of this comes down to how you are brought up. If you are in a position to help, I think you should do so. And I happen to think using our skills in business is the best way for us to be effective. That is what we try to do with Virgin Unite”—Virgin’s charity, which focusses on entrepreneurial solutions to problems that range from AIDS in Africa to homelessness in the United States. “I don’t want to get dramatic and say, ‘Now I have found my calling,’ ” Branson told me. “But I have to pinch myself if I think back to the height of the Sex Pistols and here I am talking about cellulosic butanol. I never thought my life would go in this direction.”

Branson had his first significant encounter with climate change when he read a book called “The Skeptical Environmentalist,” by Bjorn Lomborg, a Danish academic who has long challenged the widely held belief that human activity places an unbearable burden on the environment. “What he argues is that we are headed toward another ice age, and all global warming is doing is slowing up that process,” Branson said. “It made sense to me, but it might have also simply made comfortable reading because I am in the airline business.”

Converts tend to be the most fervent zealots, however, and Branson has been converted completely. “If this is the problem that a lot of us think it is, then it is far worse than the First World War and the Second World War combined,” he said. “Worse than any war we have ever faced. And you would have thought that world leaders would be meeting with an enormous sense of urgency. And they are not. Yet, even if we are all wrong, you would still have thought that somebody out there would be trying to develop alternatives to our reliance on the Middle East.”

On his own property, Branson is deploying multiple sources—wind power, solar energy, and biodiesel—in an attempt to eliminate carbon emissions. Both islands will be more heavily dependent on wind and solar power during the winter. Excess energy will be used to produce and store desalinated water. Branson currently spends nearly four hundred thousand dollars a year on fuel for Necker alone—much of the cost includes the expense of importing diesel. He expects his investment to pay for itself in less than six years. He also hopes to persuade the rest of the British Virgin Islands to follow his lead. “This is a demonstration project,” he said. He was wearing a T-shirt inside out and cutoff shorts, and was drinking an iced tea. We were staring out toward the heliport, which will soon have a wind turbine next to it—one of six that he plans to place on the island. “We want to show that becoming carbon-neutral won’t cost money, that it will actually make economic sense. That is the only way you will get most people to change their habits.

“This is really not just about us,” he added. “The Caribbean needs to get out in front here. If the Arctic goes in the next decade, which is likely, that means Greenland could melt—at least, the ice on top of it. With that we could see a gigantic rise in sea levels. So it is in the self-interest of all islands on the earth to set an example, because they will be among the first affected.”



“Toughness isn’t something you look for in a mother.”

Despite the Bush Administration’s tepid response to the threat posed by global warming, cities and states have introduced dozens of measures aimed at producing (and requiring) more energy-

ALL VISITORS MUST BE ANNOUNCED, THEN DENIGRATED IN SOME WAY.
BEK

efficient vehicles, buildings, and appliances. Studies have shown that even seemingly small conservation efforts can have a dramatic impact on the environment. Australia, for example, may soon require the use of compact fluorescent light bulbs, which expend seventy-five per cent less energy than incandescent bulbs. That shift alone is expected to reduce the country's carbon emissions by four million tons every year. (There are forty-five light bulbs in the average American home; reducing that number by just one would be equivalent to removing nearly a million automobiles from the road.)

Conservation can take us only so far, however. Each year, the world's demand for coal, oil, and gas to power factories, cars, and homes increases—and no plan to reduce emissions is likely to succeed unless it includes a major commitment to developing clean, renewable sources of energy. Despite recent increases in the production of ethanol and in the purchase of hybrids, the fundamental relationship between oil and prosperity remains unbroken. And so does a system of subsidies that discourages investments in alternatives. "I can't think of an example in human history of a bad technology having been replaced by another product whose only improvement was a social good," Daniel Kammen told me when we met recently in his office at the University of California at Berkeley, where he founded the Energy and Resources Group at the Goldman School of Public Policy. Branson has hired Kammen and Daniel Prull, one of his graduate students, to devise a scheme to eliminate carbon emissions on Necker. New technologies arise out of ingenuity, sophistication, and need, Kammen argues, not necessarily because they are good for the planet. "Look at iPods," he said. "They play music. But they do it in a useful, remarkably portable, digital way that serves many purposes—which is why they have spread through our world like a virus. We need to do that with alternative fuels; but, when you look at what most people are advocating, the changes—more use of wind power, and solar energy, for example—are simply not radical enough to create this contagion effect."

The airline industry provides a particularly graphic illustration of the limits of incremental change. Aircraft are responsible for just two per cent of the world's daily burden of greenhouse emissions, but that figure belies their true impact. Eighty-five thousand commercial aircraft take off and land each day, a number that is growing by five per cent a year. At that pace, by 2050 there will be twice as many flights as there are now. That increase is largely a reflection of global prosperity and of the opportunity that comes with it. But the environmental costs are acute: a single flight across the Atlantic can generate more carbon dioxide than an average motorist would produce in a year of driving. Furthermore, that carbon is released exactly where some scientists believe it does the most harm, because each molecule of CO_2 created by burning gas or coal takes half of its hundred-year lifetime to rise from a smokestack or an exhaust pipe into the stratosphere.

Carbon dioxide released at thirty thousand feet has many effects, and none are salutary. Greenhouse gases slow the process known as the thermohaline cycle, which governs the density of salt in oceans and helps determine the temperature of the polar regions. Too much carbon warms the cycle, and that, in turn, melts sea ice, dramatically affecting fish populations and coral reefs. "This is a problem we have no plan in place to solve," Branson told me. "I have tried to experiment with slowing down flights and having them fly at lower altitudes." The benefits of these measures are not large, and it's hard for just one airline to alter the air-traffic system. Earlier this year, Virgin began using tugs to move planes onto runways at some airports, rather than the aircraft's engines. That change alone, on a flight between Heathrow and J.F.K., eliminates the need for two tons of fuel. Two weeks ago, Branson announced that next year, on a Boeing 747, Virgin would make the first commercial flight powered by clean-fuel technology.

Daniel Kammen's office is home to the pragmatic, hardheaded faction of the green movement. He is not romantic about saving the earth, and neither are many of his colleagues at Berkeley, who are only too aware that people need incentives to change their behavior. The Berkeley team helped write the legislation that has made California the most environmentally aggressive state with regard to cutting carbon emissions.

"It is hard to stress fully enough Richard's importance right now," Kammen told me. "What is still lacking here is what I call the 'third wave' of environmentalism. The first wave was Rachel Carson: recognizing the problem, and understanding that we need to protect the environment. That led to Stage 2:

the system of regulations and taxes that helped make it possible to implement the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and other vital legislation." They all worked very well, and the environment improved immensely. But regulation has its limits. "Kyoto is not going to save us," Kammen said. "No global treaty is going to be sufficient. We also need a couple of big actors." Political decisions like implementing carbon taxes, lowering speed limits, and raising mileage requirements for motor vehicles will all be essential. "What we need more, though, is a charismatic megaphone," Kammen said.

"Richard is willing to say, 'This affects my airlines, my trains, and my income,' " he continued. "And he knows how to get people to pay attention to him. Of course, the environmental movement contains some of the last true puritans, and those people call him selfish, because he will clearly earn money if this works. But, for God's sake, so what? The man is willing to pull the trigger. I know other people who are just as affluent and they are totally constipated about what to do. Richard is not. He will move from one interesting risky proposition to another. Some will fail—just as some of his businesses have failed. But he keeps moving forward."

At present, Kammen explained, the national power grid flows in one direction, from big central utilities to the consumer. That prevents people with solar panels, say, or windmills from selling excess energy back into the system. "The model we want for the energy market is more like eBay," Kammen told me. "Sell what you don't use to somebody who wants it. If I can sell power to my utility by demonstrating that I regularly put power into the grid at 4 P.M. on a hot summer day—when demand goes up and it costs the most—that is worth knowing. We could have a rating system, just as they do on eBay, that would let people judge us with confidence as we sell our excess. Renewable sources of energy would go from being the last thing a utility wants to take on board to being the first, because it would cost the utility next to nothing." If California and other states adopted policies that strongly support plug-in hybrid automobiles, there would be much more demand for clean electricity at night (so people could charge their cars at times when energy was less expensive to use). That would provide a huge incentive for people to install wind farms on their real farms.

Ethanol is usually made from corn blended with gasoline, and it accounts for more than ninety-five per cent of the biofuels under development in the United States (which is less than five per cent of the total energy produced). To harvest and refine the corn requires considerable energy (which itself burns fossil fuels). The savings are marginal. There are other ways to make ethanol, though; one of the most promising—cellulosic ethanol—comes from woody plants and grasses. Cellulosic sources can be fermented into ethanol by simply using energy generated by the rest of the plant. This process adds only small amounts of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, because the plants' emissions are balanced by the carbon dioxide that is absorbed as they grow. Substituting cellulosic ethanol for gasoline should reduce greenhouse emissions by as much as ninety per cent.

Ethanol is heavy, though, and its density could make it difficult to use in airplanes. Butanol might work, but it is not well enough understood to be used in jet fuel anytime soon. There are more experimental and, perhaps, more promising approaches: scientists are seeking to use the tools of molecular biology, as they have with crops, to produce genetically modified fuel. "I am so excited about the possibilities of really engineering something that will make a dramatic difference," Branson told me when we were on Necker Island. "It is the biggest type of gamble, perhaps. But that is exactly what we need the most."

Branson mentioned his interest in the work of Amyris Biotechnologies, which got its start in the laboratories of Berkeley and has been concentrating on three synthetic molecules: one to replace gasoline, one that works like diesel, and another to make jet fuel.

Synthetic biology—a new field that combines biology, genetics, and engineering—seeks to create and alter organisms so that they can then produce drugs and make other compounds that would help us to move away from our dependence on petroleum products. Amyris has already used such tools to address one of the world's most pressing problems; its first product is a package of genes from three different organisms that, when inserted into yeast, help make artemisinin, the world's only truly effective malaria treatment. Currently, the drug has to be extracted from the sweet-wormwood plant, which is indigenous to China and Vietnam. It is difficult to manufacture in sufficient quantities, particularly at a cost low enough to serve the hundreds of millions of people who need it each year.

I drove across the Bay Bridge one morning to speak with John G. Melo, Amyris's C.E.O., at his office in Emeryville. Melo told me that the company's synthetic version of ethanol is based on sugar. Using sugarcane is cheaper and more environmentally benign than using corn, and would place almost no carbon in the atmosphere. "Initially, we had not thought about jet fuel," Melo said. That changed after Branson made his announcement at the Clinton meeting last fall. Jet fuel must function at thirty degrees below zero centigrade, and so far the company's product has been tested only in the laboratory; but Melo said that the Amyris molecule easily passed that test and has essentially the same energy content as the gas that planes use today.

"What amazes me the most about all this," Branson had told me, "is how promising the research is and how little money has been invested to help it along. If biofuels are made right, they should help create another green revolution." It would be hard to dispute the promise of biofuels—particularly as a replacement for burning oil and coal. Yet almost any project that is derived from collecting trees, crops, or fibre will require an enormous manipulation of nature (as would, surely, most plans to scrub billions of tons of carbon from the atmosphere). The world's forests are already in peril; harvesting trees to make cellulosic ethanol can only make them disappear faster. Few achievements of modern science have been more bitterly disputed than altering the genetic composition of crops for food; to do it for fuel will be no less controversial. The price of corn, sugar, and soybeans is certain to rise if they become powerful sources of energy. Worse yet, each of those crops demands a constant infusion of freshwater—which may be the scarcest commodity of all. Branson is right: if these issues are addressed properly, there could be a new green revolution. But magic bullets are hard to find.

I asked Branson whether he might be viewing the world through an unusually optimistic lens. "I don't know any other way to look at it," he replied. "We know when there is a world war humans are magnificent at changing their behavior. Before Pearl Harbor, six thousand warplanes were made in the United States. Then America went to war, and within three years the number grew to more than a quarter of a million." Branson became more animated as he went on. "In a crisis situation, humans are brilliant. They know how to react. Our problem is that we have not gotten governments into that crisis mode. But if necessary we will do it without them."

There is no gathering of technology geeks more exclusive than TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design), which is held each spring in Monterey. It is an invitation-only event—four thousand people each pay six thousand dollars, and many others are turned away. If you can countenance the summer-camp ethos—attendees refer to each other as TEDsters and TEDizens—the group does manage to herd together many of the most interesting people in the world. It is one of the few places on earth where you can see Bill Clinton, E. O. Wilson, or Philippe Starck chatting amiably with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Cameron Diaz, or Paul Simon. This year's theme was "Icons, Geniuses and Mavericks," and on the final day of the conference its organizer, Chris Anderson, interviewed Richard Branson before a rapt, capacity crowd.

It was early on a Saturday morning, and Branson looked a little ragged. He had been out the night before with several people from Google, including one of the founders, Sergey Brin. When there didn't seem to be enough room in the car, Branson jumped into the trunk and curled up there. As Anderson ran through Branson's résumé, a slide show flashed behind them: Branson launching a Virgin Megastore in Los Angeles, then dressed in a tulle-and-lace wedding gown to publicize the opening of a Virgin Brides store. There were shots of helicopters lowering him into Times Square and of Branson hoisting Pamela Anderson over his shoulder to help launch Virgin Cola. ("We launched a cola bottle called the Pammy, because it is shaped a bit like Pamela Anderson," Branson explained.)

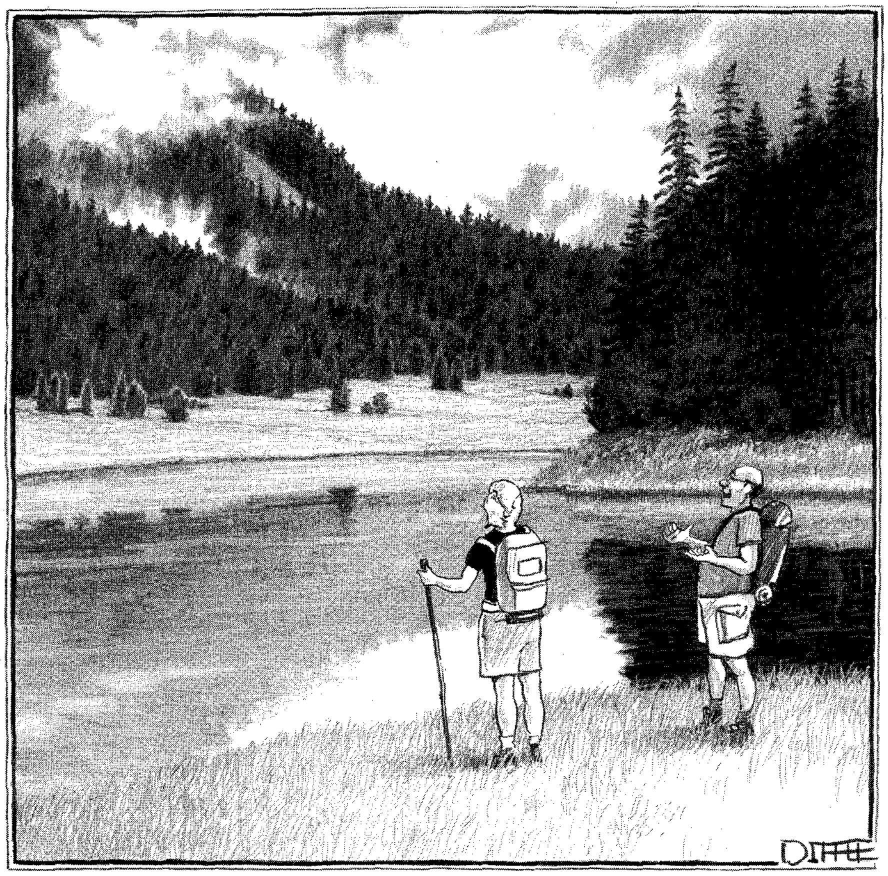
A list of Virgin companies flashed onto the screen. Chris Anderson asked Branson how involved he is in the mechanics of the business—after all, there are so many. Branson laughed. "Well, I don't understand these things completely," he said. "For instance, I have been running the largest group of private companies in Europe, but I had never been able to know the difference between net and gross. So the board meetings have been fascinating. Because I will have to say, 'Is that good news or bad news?'

"When I turned fifty," he went on, "somebody took me outside the boardroom and said, 'Look, Richard. Let's draw you a diagram. Here is a net and here is the sea. The fish that you've pulled from the sea go into the net and they are your profit. You get to keep it, so they call it the net.' Finally, I had worked it all out."

There are times when it is hard to know whether Branson is as humble as he seems or if he is putting us on. Is he just a lucky gambler? And will the planet be as lucky?

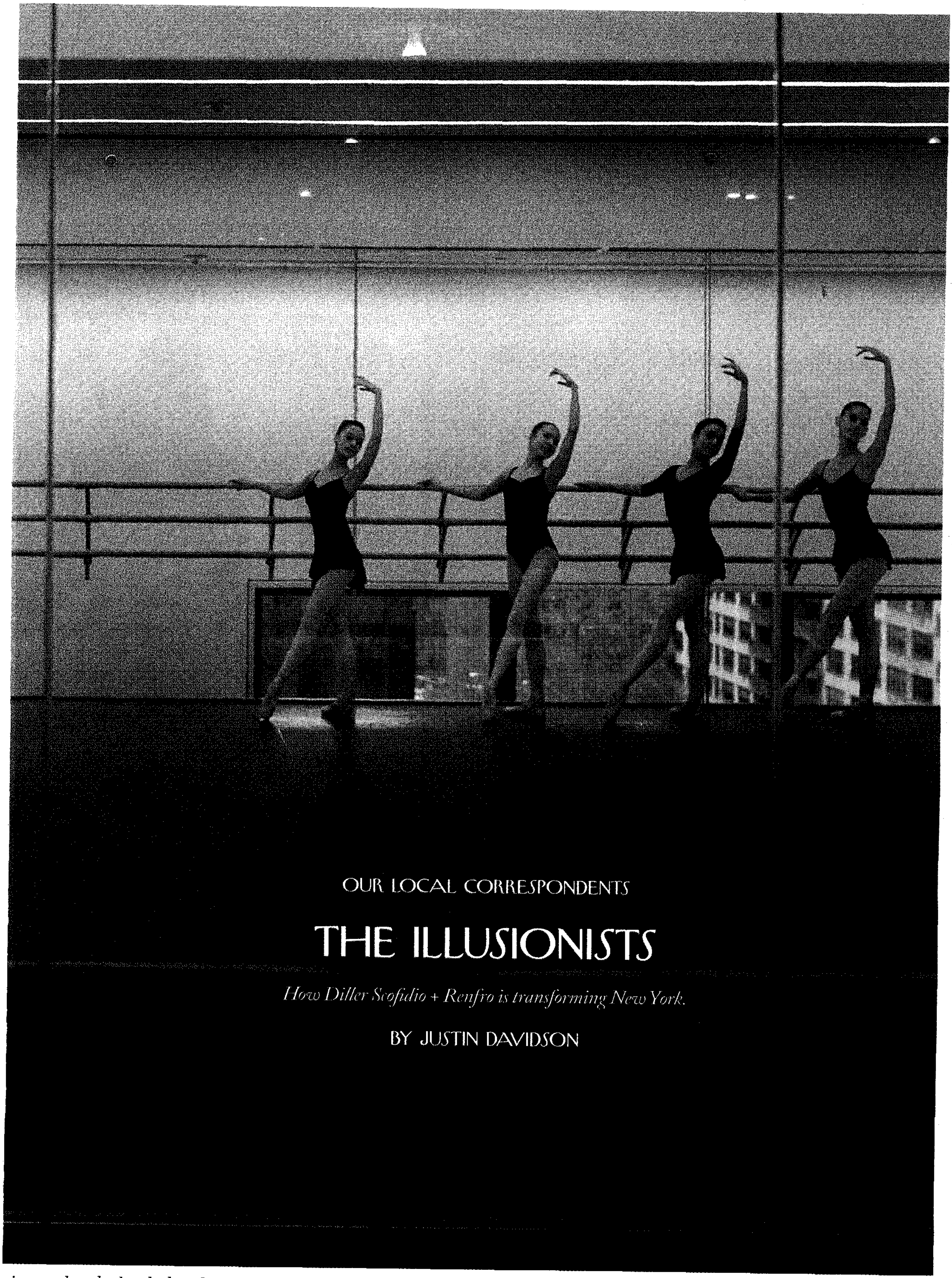
"I don't think I am different really from any entrepreneur," he told me later that day. "You have to stick your neck out on occasion. You have to make bold moves, and sometimes you come close to betting everything. In my speeches, I will always say you have to protect the downside. But there have been occasions when I have asked my wife to sign a bit of paper. And she would say, 'What's that, dear?' And I would always say, 'Don't worry,' when it was actually the third mortgage on the house.

"But I really do believe that if something is important enough you should go and bet the damn house," he said. "Fortunately, we have no mortgages on our property now. So that is past. But there are bigger things we need to gamble on. Much bigger things." ♦



"This would be a great place to put a huge city."

Ricardo Scofidio, Elizabeth Diller, and Charles Renfro at the School of American Ballet. Diller says, "When we did our first architectu



OUR LOCAL CORRESPONDENTS

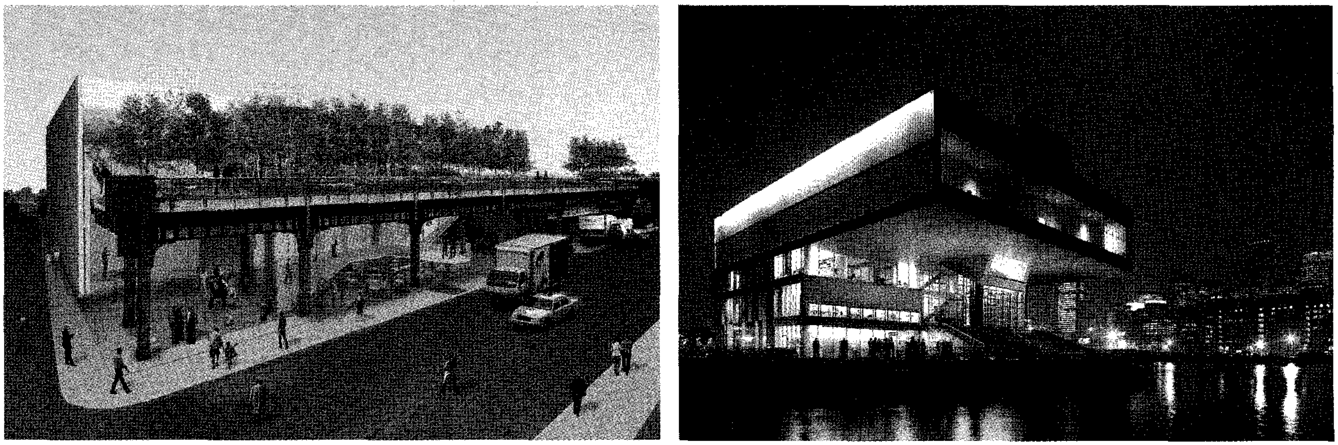
THE ILLUSIONISTS

How Diller Scofidio + Renfro is transforming New York.

BY JUSTIN DAVIDSON

oject, and we had to deal with contractors, and we had to get paid, I felt a little soiled." Photograph by Robert Polidori.

If you're going seventy-five miles per hour on the New York State Thruway, and a 1963 vanilla Porsche swings out beside you, cuts across three lanes, and darts into the distance, there is a good chance that the driver is Ricardo Scofidio, the Manhattan-based architect, trying to clear his crowded mind with speed. Such a driver should be catnip for the highway patrol, but Scofidio, who is seventy-two, has honed a politely defiant relationship with authority figures, which helps things go his way. Once, while driving through New Jersey, he spotted a police cruiser in front of a car dealership, and he knew that he'd set off the radar gun. So he swerved into the lot and pulled up next to the startled cop. "You got me," he announced. The policeman gave him a warning and sent him on his way.



The firm's designs for the redevelopment of the High Line, in Chelsea (left), and for the Institute of Contemporary Art, in Boston.

COURTESY CITY OF NEW YORK/FIELD OPERATIONS; IWAN BAAN/COURTESY DILLER SCOFIDIO + RENFRO

In 2002, he took a similar tack with several Swiss building-department officials who were scrutinizing his designs for a temporary structure that was to sit in the middle of Lake Neuchâtel. Called the Blur Building, it had no walls and no interior—only a walkway and hundreds of nozzles spewing water vapor into the air, creating an artificial cloud. The regulators insisted that it have a sprinkler system, too. Scofidio flew to Switzerland and patiently demonstrated, with water-flow diagrams, that the building essentially was its own ultra-powerful sprinkler. Rather than argue that a firefighting system wasn't necessary, he pointed out that he'd already provided one. The regulators were appeased. "I figured the only way I could win this was to out-bureaucratize the bureaucrats," he told me.

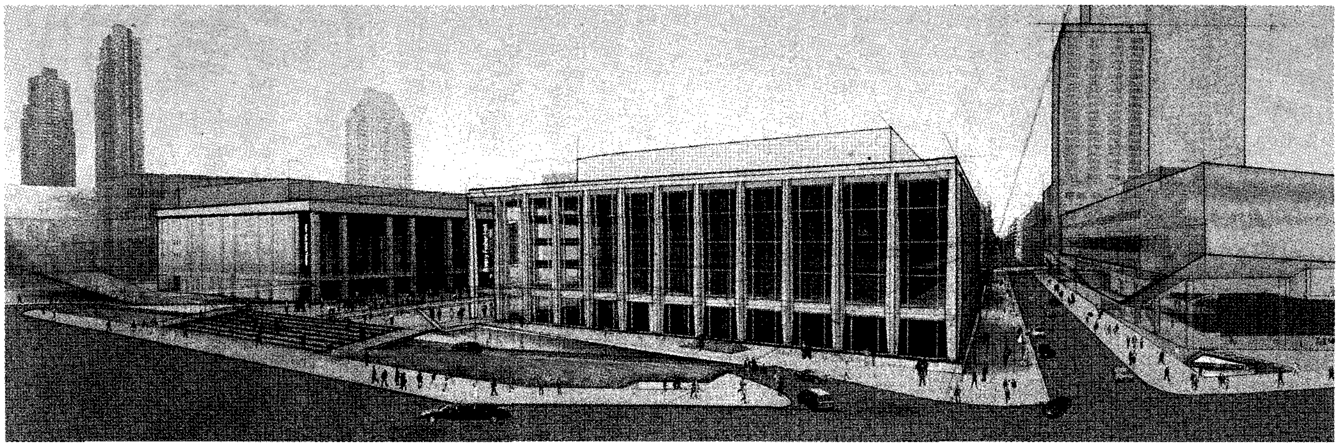
Scofidio's sideways approach to officialdom meshes well with the more direct manner of his wife and collaborator, Elizabeth Diller, who prefers to overwhelm people with reason. When they are together, Diller becomes the designated explainer, persuader, and theorist. He silently nods, occasionally tries to raise an objection, then sits back with a resigned smile, waiting for his turn to speak.

Diller and Scofidio's relationship began as a form of resistance. He was a professor at Cooper Union, married with four children; she was his most brilliant student. Neither felt committed to architecture. He was thinking about abandoning it, and she worried that it was too commercial a vocation. Nevertheless, design was what they talked about most. Tod Williams, an architect who taught with Scofidio, and who also married his creative partner, Billie Tsien, recalled, "Ric felt invigorated by Liz. In architecture, the collaborations are so intense that having someone you share a deep connection with is incredibly important. Ric's more intuitive, and she's much more intellectual. He thinks a lot about physical things, and she brings a way of talking about life."

In 1979, the year Diller graduated, she and Scofidio moved in together, started working side by side, and, without quite meaning to, founded a studio. (They also married, although they can't remember exactly when.) Charles Renfro, who joined the firm in 2000 and three years later became a partner, said of them, "For years, they refused to tell people they were married. They'd say, 'We're business partners first, life partners second.'"

They don't, at first, seem perfectly matched. Scofidio is a tall, laconic man with a slight stoop and a distracted air. His finger has a tendency to alight on the pewter-colored soul patch on his chin, as if he were surprised to find it there. He sometimes gives the impression that he is looking over people's heads at something amusing on the horizon. We spent many hours together, over several weeks, before I could be sure that he would recognize me the next time we met. Diller has short, tousled hair and a gaze that combines burning concentration with deep fatigue. It sometimes seems as though her entire life had been an extended creative confrontation. Her parents wanted her to become a doctor; when she immersed herself in art instead, they hoped she would at least channel her passions into a reputable profession—like architecture. "My response was totally defiant," Diller recalled. "I wanted to go a hundred and eighty degrees in the other direction." Yet the intellectual rigor of architecture seduced her. It was years before she admitted to her parents that she had, in fact, received a degree in the field. "I never gave them the satisfaction," she said. At fifty-three, she still had a note of triumph in her voice. With her firm, she has turned orneriness into a professional strategy. "We aren't a service organization," Diller recently grumbled to Scofidio, as they went over a client's list of demands. "We're not just there to solve problems. We *make* problems."

The couple's first freestanding building in the United States is the recently opened Institute of Contemporary Art, in Boston. Known informally as the I.C.A., it is the city's first new museum in almost a century, and a sleekly modern reproach to Boston's conventional repertoire of red-brick façades and marble pediments. For one thing, the museum doesn't actually have a façade: its main entrance has been hidden in a corner, and a grand staircase, doubling as outdoor bleachers, has been placed in the back, facing Boston Harbor. The main architectural drama occurs in the air, where the top floor hovers over the edge of the harbor walkway, like a jewel casket held aloft by an unseen hand. As with all rebellious gestures, the I.C.A. derives its meaning from the very conventions it rejects. If nineteenth-century galleries—such as New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art or Boston's Museum of Fine Arts—invited visitors to elevate themselves by ascending their temple fronts, the I.C.A. dangles its treasures coyly out of reach. It's a come-on, an architectural version of Diller and Scofidio's 1993 Times Square video installation, "Soft Sell," in which a female mouth, viewed in closeup, murmured metaphysical invitations to passersby: "Hey, you, wanna buy a ticket to paradise?"



The Lincoln Center plan will lighten the complex by replacing some walls with glass, a strategy that Diller calls "elaborate striptease."

For the first twenty years of their partnership, Diller and Scofidio were barely considered architects at all. They lurked at the profession's cerebral fringe, producing art installations and designing sets for dance performances. They manufactured that Swiss cloud. They designed a champagne flute whose stem contained a hypodermic needle pointing upward. They folded and ironed button-down shirts into a kind of oxford origami. But they hardly built anything with walls, plumbing, and a roof. "My interest was always to do interdisciplinary work with space," Diller told me. "I thought of architecture as one strand in a multimedia practice. When we did our first architectural project, and we had to deal with contractors, and we had to get paid, I felt a little soiled."

In 1990, Diller and Scofidio completed a design for the Slow House, a weekend home in the Hamptons commissioned by a young Japanese art collector. Their models and drawings appeared on the cover of architecture magazines and entered museum collections, including MOMA's. In the end, the client's fortune withered, and the house was never built. It would have risen on a banana-shaped foundation, with the front door at one end, and a curving hallway down its length that led to a picture window facing the ocean. "The view was protected—nobody could build in front of it," Scofidio said. "People pay a lot of money for that. So we were thinking about the monetary value of the view." But they weren't thinking about it the way a real-estate agent might; rather, they wanted to comment on a system that assigns a dollar amount to a slice of sea and sky. The house's pièce de résistance was a monitor placed directly in front of the window, displaying a live video of the same view. The collector could stand in his living room just before dusk, and gaze at a reproduction of the sunset blocked by the screen. This was both more than a house and less—an irritatingly clever demonstration of the postmodern theory that all seeing is "mediated," and all views the product of someone exercising control.

The Slow House design attracted a rash of new commissions, and Diller and Scofidio—architecture's cult ironists—became honest-to-goodness builders, leavening their stubborn devotion to conceptual thinking with elegant craftsmanship. They are working with the landscape-architecture firm Field Operations to transform the High Line, an elevated railway bed on the West Side of Manhattan, into a linear park that feels suspended in the air. The High Line's industrial wilderness, Diller said, represents "a triumph of nature, the romance of the ruin. So we're interested in interpreting the encroachments of nature." (Private developers, who don't care much about postmodern theory but know a good urban amenity when they see one, have already begun flanking the High Line with condominiums and hotels.) Meanwhile, Diller and Scofidio are also responsible for the big hole currently inconveniencing pedestrians on the northwest corner of Broadway and Sixty-fifth Street; it is the prelude to an almost impossibly intricate overhaul of Lincoln Center, which is scheduled to take at least three more years. Diller and Scofidio never set out to become members of the architectural establishment, but they have.

At one end of the architectural spectrum are signature shape-makers such as Frank Gehry, who drapes his bent-metal forms around concert halls, museums, and corporate headquarters so that his personality is more obvious than a building's function. At the other end are the architects whom Renfro calls "programmists," including Rem Koolhaas, who arrives at a form by assessing a client's specific needs. Renfro made it clear that he and his partners skew in that direction. "Programmists have a social approach," he said. "They're saying that life is the interesting part, not the building."

One recent morning, Diller gave me a tour of the first finished element of the new Lincoln Center: a pair of ghostly, floating dance studios in the School of American Ballet. Inside each of two double-height rooms, Diller's team had inserted a glass case that felt as if it were levitating near the ceiling, even though it was quite obviously resting on three massive beams. The kinetic design seemed to be colluding with the dancers in their assault on gravity. Seen from below, dancers in the glass-encased studios looked like figures in a snow globe. Diller makes explicit parallels between dance and design; she talks about her desire to create a "choreography of space," by which she means leading people along pathways through a building, predicting their rhythms, and revealing rooms and views in a calculated sequence.

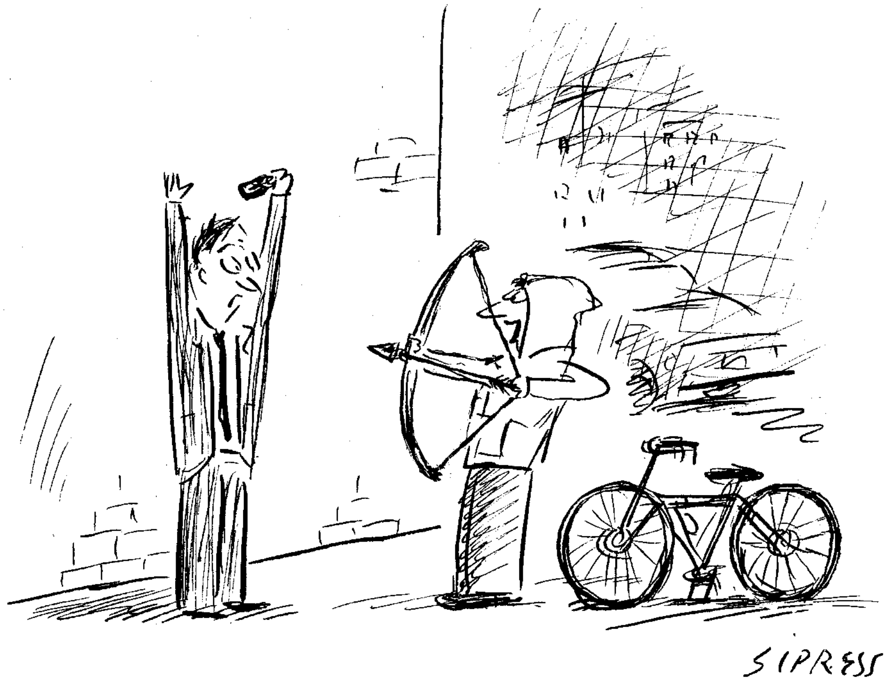
We left the ballet school, and Diller led me out to Sixty-fifth Street and into the offices of the Film Society of Lincoln Center. After ushering me through a narrow corridor and past an unmarked steel door, Diller went down several flights of stairs, into the bowels of the complex. Behind another steel door was a cavern-like room, where a boiler was making snoring sounds. "There it is," she said, pointing to a freestanding wall of honeyed wood twenty-five feet high; the surface curved and folded back on itself, like a slice of prosciutto on a platter. "That's the future Alice Tully Hall."

We were looking at a mockup of the interior of Lincoln Center's main chamber-music venue. Whereas an architectural model is a miniature of the whole, a mockup is a full-scale fragment, intended to give a tactile sense of what it would really be like to inhabit a space. Diller turned off the boiler room's fluorescent tubes, and for a moment the only source of light was the lurid glare of an "Exit" sign. Then she fumbled with a computer panel, and the mockup's undulating wall began to glow. Architects use the word "skin" to describe any thin surface, but this looked eerily like the real thing—a living membrane with dozens of lights shining through it. "Architecture is nothing but a special-effects machine," Diller said. "We wanted to steal the show, just for a moment, before the performers come on."

The countless string quartets and chamber orchestras that performed at Alice Tully Hall always seemed stuck at the end of a long, cheerless tube. Now the hall has been closed for renovations, and when it reopens, in a year and a half, it will retain its basic shape, but it will be both sleeker and more comforting—a room without edges, only fleshlike folds. "We couldn't move the stage or reconfigure the entrances," Diller explained. "We could only strip out the skin and replace it. We wanted to make it acoustically better, and give it a warm, intimate feeling. One way was to declutter it, making it a seamless womb in which the acoustical elements—the walls, the floor, the ceiling, even the stage—would all be part of the same skin."

The Tully Hall mockup had been built both as a study tool and as a prop in an elaborate process of persuasion. The first phase of architecture is articulating a need; the second is creating a fantasy; the third is coaxing people with money and power to share that fantasy. In the case of Lincoln Center, Diller has needed to seduce a lot of people, among them the leaders of a dozen constituent organizations, the members of various task forces and "working groups," and a vast network of city bureaucrats. "At the beginning, we didn't realize what we were getting into," Diller admitted. "I was frustrated by the layers that had to be worked through to get anything done. But, after a while, I began to understand that negotiating all these components was an interesting endeavor in itself. Talking to City Planning, or to all the constituents who don't see eye to eye—it's an incredible creative challenge."

One of the principal decision-makers is Reynold Levy, the president of Lincoln Center. Diller told me that Levy had repeatedly brushed aside the idea of luminescent walls, calling them an expensive frill. Nevertheless, she had her staff spend a year working out the logistics with a millworker in Philadelphia and a resin manufacturer in Salt Lake City, in case Levy changed his mind. "When we proposed shining light through a wall, we thought it would be easy," she said. "Architects love shining light through everything. They're like kids who will put anything in their mouths. We found a way to laminate the veneer onto molded-resin panels, and resin can transmit light. But then we had to figure out how to get the veneer cut thin enough, which can be done only by one company, in Japan. We had to figure out how to attach the veneer to the resin, so it wouldn't separate. We had to figure out how to mold the resin and the wood together, so it would make these curves and give us these complicated geometries. We had to figure out how to light it. Fluorescent light is bright, but it makes a buzz. Halogen gets too hot; the veneer might crack. So we went with L.E.D. lights."



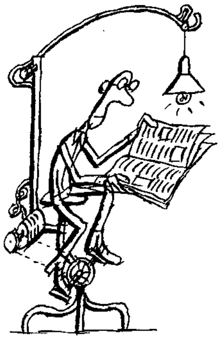
"I'm a green thief."

The mockup was built in Salt Lake City, and was expensive to transport, so Diller kept pleading with Levy to go see it there. Finally, he found a Sunday when he could squeeze in a day trip. Diller cancelled a lecture she had agreed to give in Italy that day, and flew to Utah with him. "As soon as he saw the mockup, he fell in love," she recalled. "It's because he's capable of totally falling for something that he has to be so careful. As long as you can block out that irrational part of you and just reflexively say no, you're safe."

Levy, recalling the trip, said of Diller, "I think she would have thrown me off the plane if I hadn't agreed."

Scofidio was born in 1935 into a family that couldn't do without music. His father was a New York jazz musician who played the alto saxophone and the clarinet with Paul Whiteman. "I'd go to sleep and there'd be a fifteen-piece band in the parlor upstairs," Scofidio recalled. "I'd wake up and my mother would be playing the piano." He took up the double bass. He still plays it from time to time, and for years his instrument occupied valuable real estate in the firm's cramped studio, in the East Village. He speaks in a deliberate, gravelly rumble that suggests a Charles Mingus solo. "Music is in my DNA, but it was a rotten profession back then," he said. "So I went into art, which was my other passion." He was also a tinkerer. As a teenager, whenever his father's car broke down, Scofidio got it moving again. Now he has the Porsche, which pleases him for its mechanical elegance. When he really wants to lose himself, he heads for the track at Lime Rock Park, in Lakeville, Connecticut, where he can whip around a mile and a half of curves in about a minute. "It's only when you're out on the track that you really appreciate what mass, weight, and speed can do," he said. "There's nothing else that can enter your brain. Work, clients—all vanish." When he's on the job, the gear-works of architecture make him happiest. He sketches truss joints for hours on end, especially on weekends, when the phone rings less. I spent one morning walking with him amid the overgrown weeds of a still-untouched portion of the High Line, near the Javits Center, and he lovingly pointed out the track's rivets and iron guardrails—the gorgeous brawn of nineteen-thirties engineering.

In 1956, Scofidio entered Columbia University; four years later, he came out an architect. By the mid-seventies, he was a partner in a Manhattan architecture firm, he had his teaching gig at Cooper Union, and he was fed up. The nineteenth-century architect Henry Hobson Richardson may never have said that an architect's first, second, and third priority should be "Get the job," but many people believe he did; Scofidio felt that the Richardson principle so dominated the profession that it had no room for idealists. In the early seventies, he was hired to help tackle a busing crisis in Buffalo by designing a racially integrated educational complex, but even that socially conscious project left him disillusioned. "It was a political ruse for politicians to get votes," he said. "They had no interest in actually studying or doing anything. Architects had to take work like that to stay alive, and that forced you to compromise."



So Scofidio quit practicing, even though he still had a family to support. He held on to his academic job, but considered it a stopgap: "I thought, If I'm not back in architecture in a couple of years, I shouldn't be teaching." Then, one day in the fall of 1976, he got into an elevator at Cooper Union with Diller and her architect boyfriend. When Scofidio stepped out, the boyfriend turned to Diller and said, "*That's* the one you're going to end up with."

Diller was born in Lodz, Poland, in 1954. Her father, a Jew who had eluded the Nazis, was the wealthy owner of a textile factory—making them a target for the country's anti-Semites. One day, she returned to their apartment to find it boarded shut. In 1959, the family immigrated to New York, leaving all their assets behind. They lived in Inwood at first, and eventually moved down to Greenwich Village. Her father became a hotel manager.

She enrolled at Cooper Union with the idea of becoming a filmmaker or a photographer. But, even as Scofidio was getting ready to reject architecture as a cynical business, Diller was increasingly drawn to it. "I realized that I was in the wrong place," she said. "In art school, it was about feeling. In architecture school, it was about ideas." (In his classes, Scofidio noted, "If you said, 'I like this,' the next question was: 'Why?'")

Diller's intelligence is an obvious feature that people can't help but comment on, like Julia Roberts's smile or Don King's hair. When she and Scofidio began their relationship—secretly, at first—she outfitted his discontent with a theoretical framework. If architecture was to be more than a service business for rich clients, then it had to pose a new set of questions. Together, Diller and Scofidio began interrogating the field's basic parameters. Why was the "plan view" the standard perspective for blueprints, when nobody ever saw the world from directly above? What is a window? What is a wall?

Scofidio left his family but not his professorship. In 1979, he and Diller moved into a loft in a storage facility across the street from the school, at 36 Cooper Square. "For years, it was just me and Liz working and living there," he recalled. "We were virtually the only tenants. The owner liked it that we lived there, because we could keep an eye on the place and let him know if the pipes froze." They were doing architecture in the sense that their installations and theatre sets had to be built, and sometimes you could walk inside them. But their budgets were minuscule, and Diller and Scofidio functioned as their own contractors, clients, and critics.

"When we started out, I didn't understand collaboration," Diller told me. "I wanted to sign my ideas, and I wanted Ric to sign his. I had a similar problem with sharing a bed and a bank account." Eventually, keeping their thoughts apart felt as awkward as having separate shelves in the refrigerator. "There were times when I'd work for three weeks solid on a project, and Liz would come by and spend three minutes on it, and it would change radically," Scofidio recalled. "So the question became: What is authorship? It certainly didn't depend on the time you spent on it." They decided to become officially known as a creative sum: Diller + Scofidio.

One of the first installations that they signed together was "The withDrawing

DECLARED VICTORY GARDEN

Room" (1987), in which they attacked some fairly innocuous domestic conventions. A dining-room table and chairs were hung near the gallery's ceiling; a wall sliced a conjugal bed into two hinged halves, which swung apart so that partners could lie head to head, but in different rooms. Two people who acknowledged no clear divisions between their architecture and their marriage, or between their office and their bedroom, had created a space in which design disrupted domesticity.

"It was a projection of a possible program," Diller explained. "It was about alienation and control of your space. Bodies can still merge, or they can be in totally different spaces. I think that would be an interesting bedroom. Well, I wouldn't say 'bedroom,' because that's an old-fashioned term, but an interesting *condition*."

Diller and Scofidio made frequent grant applications; whenever they received substantial money, they hired more associates. "We'd take on a bunch of people and say, 'We can't pay you very much but we'll have fun doing something beautiful, and when we're done we'll go our separate ways,'" Scofidio said. These temporary designers crowded the studio—a raw space whose bathroom was demarcated by a piece of fabric hanging from a beam. Architecture, even scruffy nonprofit architecture, is a round-the-clock profession, and, as projects overlapped, their apartment began to resemble a cross between a sweatshop and a commune. "People might be working until three or four in the morning, and another group would come in to give a client presentation at nine," Scofidio said. "It got so that we had to check into a hotel to get some sleep. The turning point came when the FedEx guy wandered in to use the bathroom."

Eventually, they moved out, reserving the apartment for their work. I first visited the studio several years ago, and it looked as though some household tasks had remained unfinished since 1979. An airplane propeller lay on the floor, a relic of some forgotten plan. "This is not a typical office," Scofidio told me at the time. "It's more of a skunk factory. When clients come to visit, I tell them, 'You're about to walk into the inside of our brain.'" But, even then, their business had outgrown their image of themselves. Lincoln Center officials came downtown for regular visits, enjoying the experience of slumming.

Last November, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, as the firm is now called, moved to a vast space in the Starrett-Lehigh Building, in Chelsea. The architects' new neighbors include Martha Stewart and Hugo Boss. Huge columns, reminiscent of an ancient Egyptian temple, give the office, which is on the eighteenth floor, a monumental feel. The décor reflects Diller's taste in clothes: white, black, and charcoal gray, with one area painted the same chartreuse as her favorite scarf. Forty-five architects and designers spend almost all their waking hours in the studio. The staff's dress code is bedhead chic: shirttails sticking out from V-neck sweaters, suspenders over T-shirts, unlaced sneakers. The practice is no longer a shabby cottage industry; it's a business that costs a quarter of a million dollars a month to run and that depends heavily on its partners' ability to bring in new commissions.

The studio still maintains what Diller likes to call its "money-losing division," which works on multimedia art projects, but the architecture side of the business can be financially draining, too. The designers enter several invitational competitions a year, and the cost of doing one can be as much as two hundred thousand dollars. Winning can guarantee years of employment, as with the High Line. In other cases, competing amounts to a form of architectural R. & D. Last year, a Danish public school announced its desire for a "visionary" new facility in Copenhagen's harbor; Diller Scofidio + Renfro responded by proposing that half the campus be submerged. During one of the early design meetings, Renfro raised his hand and said to the assembled team, "Just so we're clear: You know we're going to lose this if we keep going?" The designers talked for a while about whether to adopt a more conventional approach, or to take the request for something "visionary" at face value. They decided to keep working on their amphibious school, and lost the competition. So much for "Get the job."

Whenever a design meeting is called, architects drift over to a drafting table. Hardly anybody sits. Everybody interrupts. Diller presides, jabbing at models and drawings with a disappointed air. Scofidio says little. Renfro offers wry one-liners and categorical opinions. "Liz is the king," a twenty-eight-year old associate, Matt Peterson, explained to me. "Charles is the prince. Ric is the king, too, but he stays more in the background. He waits to say anything until he knows exactly what it is he wants to say." Despite this oligarchic structure, the design process is reasonably communal. Even the most junior staff members are listened to, and though everyone contributes suggestions, nobody takes ownership of any ideas. "Liz and Ric don't agree on everything," Peterson said. "But if they have different ideas we do it two ways. And then one of them gets picked. Usually Liz's."

One Friday afternoon, Peterson and a more senior associate, Gerard Sullivan, showed Diller materials that they had prepared for a Monday-morning presentation. The design was for the scholars' reading room at Juilliard: a small wood-panelled sanctum for perusing the school's collection of rare musical manuscripts. Sullivan and Peterson had worked through the night, and both were badly in need of a shower and a shave. Diller leafed through the pages and asked for a different rendering, which required taking a new photograph of the site and then using a computer to overlay a virtual-wood finish. "I'll be here Saturday and Sunday, so I can look at it whenever you're done," she said.

"I need to get some sleep at some point," Peterson murmured.

Diller nodded absently and went on with her instructions. Sullivan, who had already put his coat on, ground his teeth. After Diller hurried away to the next project, Peterson, who is Australian, began resignedly collecting the scattered drawings. "I did come halfway around the world to be here," he said.

From the studio's bank of windows, the architects can look down on the High Line, which begins across the street from the Javits Center, skirts the Hudson Rail Yards, and runs south through the industrial buildings where trains once delivered goods, all the way down to the meatpacking district. It is a rusted, industrial-age ruin that Diller and Scofidio find perversely appealing just the way it is. If they could get away with adding just a walkway of planks, they would. But parts of the structure are weak, so they'll have to dig down and make repairs to the concrete bed or the steel skeleton; they will then replace the soil and replant it, in order to create an illusion of evocative neglect. A system of concrete planks will allow vegetation to grow in the cracks, and in some places the pavers will leave room for an unruly patchwork of sumac, tall grass, and shrubs. Scofidio had originally hoped to use the top of an elevator as a mobile planter, so that a tree would sink and rise as the car went down to the street and up to the rail bed, but that idea was rejected as a maintenance nightmare.

Scofidio, surveying the project from the office windows, said that the allure of the High Line depends on a certain degree of inaccessibility. "We don't want to make too many entry points," he said. "We have a rhythm that looks like a musical composition—a rhythm like a bass drum on every block. Then we try to find places where we can open up views. My hope is that it doesn't become engulfed by developers." But the High Line crosses an area that is transforming so convulsively that the few meatpacking wholesalers left standing among the gleaming boutiques now look out of place. The developer André Balazs is building a luxury hotel that will grow beneath, above, and around the rail line, as an oak tree envelops an old fence. At Sixteenth Street, the builder of a condominium is negotiating for an entrance for his tenants directly onto the High Line, in exchange for providing public access, as well as an elevator and toilets. The Whitney Museum plans to construct a new outpost on Gansevoort Street, designed by Renzo Piano. Diller is philosophical about the gentrification process. "You have to be supple and understand New York, and the urban ecology of building development," she said. "The High Line is an attractor, and it's going to have big buildings around it. You just have to go with the flow."

Charles Renfro arrived for lunch at the Brasserie—a restaurant in the Seagram Building which the firm designed in 2000—wearing a knit vest over a long-underwear shirt, and a silk bandanna knotted at the neck. The place was full, and several parties huddled in the cramped foyer by the coat check, waiting for tables. "This doesn't work," Renfro said. "We're going to have to do something." He grimaced at the Formica stand supporting the maître d's computer: "What happened to the beautiful one we gave them?" The Brasserie project had prompted Renfro to join Diller and Scofidio's studio. An undulating sheet of wood, not unlike the one planned for Tully Hall, flows across the Brasse-

"May I represent you across the street?"

rie's ceiling and down the walls, curving into a long banquette. "That wrapper was my idea," he said, after we sat down. He gestured to one side where thin lime-green walls, bolted to modernist benches, formed a series of intimate niches. "Liz thought of tilting the partitions between the booths, and Ric figured out the armature that holds them up. Every piece has a little of each of us in it."

Diller and Scofidio had spent so many years merging their identities—in 1999, they became the first architects, and the second married couple, to win a MacArthur Foundation Award—that promoting Renfro to partner was a little like adding another person to their marriage. At forty-two, Renfro is younger than three of Scofidio's children. "I'm not sure if I'm the kid they never had or the sibling who can break up a fight," he said. "I'm also very parental on occasion. I sometimes have to remind them that they have a third partner. It's not second nature to them to bring someone else into their decision-making." Tension is built into the firm's working method: all decisions are made by unanimous agreement, but Diller and Scofidio get to hash out their positions in private.

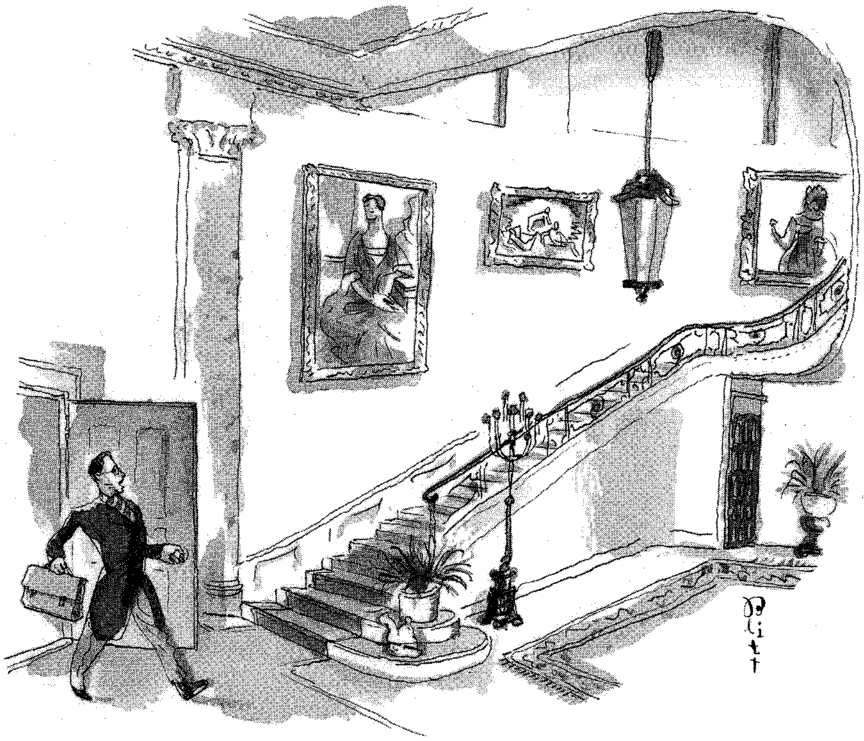
Besides being a pleasant place to have lunch, the Brasserie is also a form of social commentary. Behind the bar, a row of video monitors shows still images from a digital camera that is trained on the revolving door, recording each customer's arrival. The screens bring glimpses of the street into the windowless dining room, turning a surveillance system into a form of narcissistic entertainment and display. Since the images remain on the monitors for several minutes, you can sit at the bar and see your televised double enter the restaurant. Here, the watched watch themselves. I asked Renfro what he thought the impact of this architectural essay might be on our fellow-diners. He answered with a question: "Will people understand that the Seagram is a Mies van der Rohe building—the most famous glass building in the world—and this is a room with no windows, and so we invented another form of windows? No. But you'd likely give some thought to surveillance."

A few days later, I asked Tod Williams how much such theories matter once a building is open for business. He responded that architects try to exert control over the interpretation of their work, but they can't. "Because Liz talks about her projects so much, I start by reading them in her terms, but on my own I experience them differently," he said. "In the end, the Brasserie is a restaurant."

The Brasserie gave the studio a reputation for treating modernist landmarks with a mixture of respectfulness and theatrical flair. Lincoln Center, the grand dowager of performance-arts complexes, needs similar treatment. It is designed for certain minutes of magic: when the opera lets out on a winter's night and snowflakes mingle with the fountain's illuminated spray, or when, in the half hour before a concert starts, crowds swarm like moths toward the luminous box of Avery Fisher Hall. But, during the daytime, the plaza becomes a desert of pavement, and the buildings, dressed in soot-stained travertine, reveal their dowdiness. One of the goals of the redevelopment is to make the glamour last all day.

In some ways, Lincoln Center is a holdover from another New York. Its planners built the complex as much to keep the wrong sort of people out as to welcome the right ones in. The various performance halls are spread out on a rise above the street. Great faceless walls rear up like castle battlements on the western side, which at the time of construction faced low-income neighborhoods. Today, though, Lincoln Center huddles in the shadow of luxury high-rises. Discussions about renovating began with the understanding that making a bastion of snobbish defensiveness feel fresh, democratic, and inviting required some delicate, yet bold, interventions.

The call went out to internationally prominent architects—including Richard Meier and Norman Foster—who responded with proposals that involved tearing down a large chunk of Lincoln Center and starting anew. "We had architects who came to us and said, 'Avery Fisher Hall's in the wrong place, so we have to either move it or move Broadway,'" Reynold Levy recalled. As the multimillion-dollar egos jostled each other, Diller and Scofidio stepped in with a message of startling humility—in essence, "We love Lincoln Center." They found the center's marbled modernism a little hokey, but it was a hokeyness that they liked. Diller talked about revealing the complex's essence by "peeling" away walls and replacing them with glass, referring to the process as an "elaborate striptease." She proposed extending Juilliard toward Broadway and breaching the building's mass with a glass-walled dance studio visible from the street. Instead of practicing behind concrete walls, dancers



"Money, I'm home!"

LISTEN

Everything about you,
my life, is both
make-believe and real.
We are like a couple
working the night shift
in a bomb factory.

Come quietly, one says
to the other
as he takes her by the hand
and leads her
to a rooftop
overlooking the city.

At this hour, if one listens
long and hard,
one can hear a fire engine
in the distance,
but not the cries for help,

just the silence
growing deeper
at the sight of a small child
leaping out of a window
with its nightclothes on fire.

—*Charles Simic*

would perform on Broadway, day and night. The architects' most audacious stroke was the decision to put a restaurant in the stylish but unfriendly plaza in front of the Vivian Beaumont Theatre. In the new design, a long, windowed dining room supports an undulating grass roof that dips down to plaza level at one corner and lifts toward the sky at another. In nice weather, Upper West Siders, Juilliard students, and Met choristers can mingle on the green slope, making the campus feel more collegiate.

Throughout the design process, Lincoln Center's leaders have seen relatively little of Scofidio or Renfro; Diller makes all the presentations and navigates the byzantine web of committees and conflicting agendas. So Diller got the credit for figuring out how to get patrons to the theatres while minimizing the risk of being hit by a car. To approach Lincoln Center from the front, pedestrians have had to negotiate the bow tie formed by Broadway and Columbus Avenue, climb a set of treacherous stairs, and then watch out for taxis speeding through the drop-off lane. Diller couldn't do anything about the thirteen lanes of converging traffic out front, but she suggested that the drop-off lane be depressed below street level and bridged by a longer, more glamorous staircase that would stretch from Broadway up to the plaza. Diller sold what she calls "a sexy, ceremonial entrance" as a bonus to a neat piece of traffic engineering. "There was an 'Aha!' moment when she showed that image of the tunnel under the stairway," Levy told me. "Everyone said, 'That's it!'"

Arriving at such moments of concord requires hundreds of hours of experimentation, frustration, and inventiveness. I spent an afternoon at the studio, sitting in on an extended discussion about the footbridge that will eventually connect the two parts of Lincoln Center, on either side of West Sixty-fifth Street. Until last summer, the main campus and the northern wing, which includes Juilliard and the administrative offices, were linked by a wide overpass that gave the street below the grim, dark look of an industrial facility. That blot has been taken down, and the architects originally proposed replacing it with a glass catwalk cutting diagonally across the street. Problems proliferated: the long span proved too expensive; the city bureaucracy sent conflicting signals; and the supports for an alternative version would have had to be threaded through a tangle of buried utility cables.

The day I visited, dozens of models for the overpass cluttered the studio's shelves and work surfaces; they ranged from expressively baroque shapes to clunky platforms. The team had decided to focus on a sleek steel-and-glass scheme with side panels tapering in opposite directions, like arrows flying past each other. Diller worried that the flat metal surfaces would feel too opaque. "How do we break up the mass?" she asked. She picked up a model that showed tiny perforations punched in the metal cladding and expressed enthusiasm for it. One of the senior project architects, Robert Condon, objected. "What I like here is the simplicity," he said. "The minute you add up these openings, you lose that. It's like we don't have the self-confidence to say, 'This is what it is.' Now we have to make it diaphanous?" He spat the last word out, as if it were vulgar.

The conversation bounced between aesthetics and practicalities. Could the starkness and gloss of steel panels be considered "light"? How would the glass sides be held in place? Could a canopy be attached? How would the city bureaucrats react? Eventually, a couple of tired architects, who had been sketching elements of the design, started fighting over a pencil and a piece of tracing paper. "C'mon guys, let's keep our eyes on the big picture here," Diller said. "What's under our feet? Concrete's not going to read."

"Can we use steel?" Renfro suggested.

Diller vetoed the idea. "That'll be slippery."

"Steel will rust out," Scofidio added. "What if you cover the surface with mesh?"

"That'll get gum in it," Diller objected. "And what about high heels?"

But Renfro seized on the idea of carpeting the walkway with wire mesh. "We can fill the holes with resin. Then you light it so it'll glow. That's so easy!"

Diller nodded. "The whole surface wants to be luminous," she said. She often endows architectural details with anthropomorphic passions.

Condon was getting dyspeptic: "Just make it out of radium. That'll glow."

A week later, Levy came in to see a model of the bridge. Diller tried to brief him on the studio's creative process, show him various rejected models, and work her way logically to the new consensus. "Where's the latest bridge?" Levy interrupted. "I like to skip to the end of the book." Diller produced the model, which depicted steel panels on the outside and naked trusses inside. "We're very excited about this," she said. "It doesn't feel like a compromise." Instead, it was the Hitchcock-cameo of bridges: simple, unobtrusive, and scene-stealing, all at the same time.

"I like it, too," Levy said. "Go for it."

Levy later told me that what he appreciates most about Diller is her ability to cut through a thicket of logistical brambles with an elegant intellectual stroke. "There is no higher compliment that you can give an American than to say she's a pragmatic problem solver," he said. "I don't see her as an architectural philosopher. I am aware that she goes up to Princeton and indulges that side of herself, but we haven't seen it."

Toward the end of the fall semester, I drove to Princeton, where Diller has been teaching since 1991, to follow her around for an afternoon of "desk crits"—a series of one-on-one sessions in which she evaluated her graduate students' final projects. They had each designed a hypothetical U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. Diller's first student produced a drawing of a building shaped like a border wall. She explained that an embassy is an "interface" between one country and another, so she had distilled its architecture down to pure façade: a building ten feet wide and a mile long, with "digital information" projected onto the exterior. Diller wondered how you could fit a visa office into such a skinny structure, let alone a meeting hall.

"It works," the student assured her. "I've figured it all out."

"I'll have to take your word for it. But what's going to be on those screens? Who's going to control them? It's not enough just to say 'digital information.' You have to be more specific."

Diller moved on to a student who had put the embassy on pontoons on the Tigris River, using the roof as a bridge between Shiite and Sunni neighborhoods. Then came a young man who had the idea of a "self-dismantling" embassy that would shrink as the military components of the American mission fell away. He had gone through a spasm of building models, and his drafting table was covered with them. "We're always taught that we're building for permanence, but why?" Diller mused. "I like the idea of a prosthetic architecture! When a section is removed, the building readjusts its weight distribution, like a living body. The question is: Can the building's progressive decay be encoded in the choice of materials? Can you use materials that deteriorate at different rates?" Neither Diller nor the student seemed bothered by the notion of representing the U.S. presence in Iraq in terms of a body with its limbs falling off.

The architects in the Chelsea studio don't have the leeway that Princeton students do to use architecture as a means of rewriting an unsatisfactory world. But they still subscribe to the belief that architecture expresses a society's aspirations, and also to the more tenuous assumption that it can mold society itself. The shape of a baseball stadium can affect a batter's swing; the form of a courthouse can ease the path of justice. Such utopian thinking underlies the firm's method: rather than execute what clients demand, the architects instruct them in what they really want—and show them what their desires really mean.

"*Architects*," Diller said—by which she meant "normal" architects—"will say, 'We need a conference room,' so they know it has to have a big table, and some chairs, and they'll start looking at materials. *We* would start talking about power relationships."

When I asked her whether they had subjected the conference room in their own studio to a similar analysis, Diller grinned. "Of course not," she said. "We just needed a big table and some chairs."

It's hard not to feel that the pressures from accountants, building codes, clients' demands, and fluctuations in the cost of steel have been salutary for a team of architects who once scorned those constraints. There's less leisure for rhetoric when construction documents are due. But they all need to keep a little theory in their lives, and that is why the three partners have maintained connections to academe. Scofidio still teaches at Cooper Union; Diller has her students at Princeton; Renfro is on the faculty at Columbia. Yet they have mixed feelings about the role teaching plays in their creative lives. "You have to give so much," Diller moaned one day in Boston. "You're sapping the energy you have for your own work." We were having a late lunch after the opening ceremonies for the Institute of Contemporary Art. The morning's adrenaline was wearing off and Diller looked drained. Renfro, too, seemed tired and burdened. His cell phone rang and he got up to take the call. "That was about Lincoln Center," he announced when he returned. "They want to talk to us to plan a meeting about planning a meeting." He rejoined the discussion of teaching. "It's when you have time to think, outside the professional demands of the office," he said. His cell phone rang again, but he silenced it and raised his eyebrows as if to say, "You see?"

Scofidio placed his fingertips together and closed his eyes. The others waited a minute or two, until he had figured out just how to formulate his thoughts. "When you teach, you go through two or three problems in a semester, and it keeps your brain working on a faster rhythm," he finally began. "One of the things I loved about playing jazz was the immediacy of it. And, with our earlier projects, we'd work on something for two weeks, put it up for a month, and then it would be in a landfill in New Jersey. With the I.C.A., it's been five years from the time we first heard about the project until today."

The Institute of Contemporary Art used to occupy a hunkered former police station in Boston's Back Bay. In 2001, its director, Jill Medvedow, heard a Harvard lecture by Diller and Scofidio, who were on her short list of architects to design a new building. The architects knew that she was in the room and expected her to greet them afterward. Instead, Medvedow recalled, "I slipped out, my head spinning, thinking, I absolutely can't choose them:

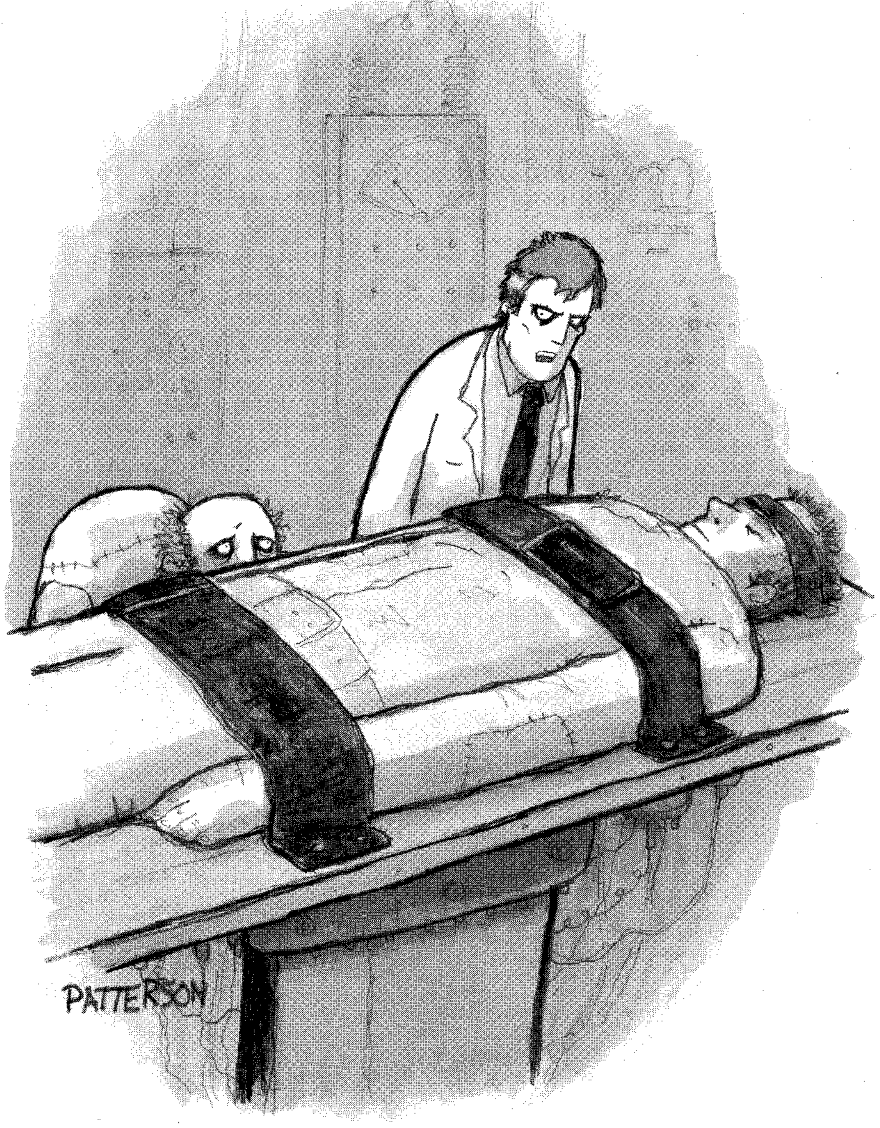
they're too academic, too theoretical. But I was strangely drawn to them and their work, so I decided to visit them at their studio. The language and the conversation were so different! They convinced me that they had been speaking to an academic audience at Harvard, but they were quite capable of switching languages."

The theatrical stroke of the new I.C.A.—the way its upper section levitates above the water's edge—is partly the product of logistical constraints. Medvedow wanted all the art to be displayed on one floor, and since the site's footprint wasn't big enough, the solution was to turn the gallery into one gigantic cantilever. Nautical planking on the boardwalk rolls up the museum's outdoor grandstand and runs beneath a glass curtain on the second floor, across the auditorium's stage, and on up the back wall. From there, it doubles back along the ceiling, creating a wooden wrapper similar to the one in the Brasserie and Alice Tully Hall.

The outside of the museum commands attention; the inside becomes a mechanism for framing views. The theatre has no wings or flies or backstage—only a glass wall facing a vista of water and oil tankers gliding slowly by. One level above, the galleries are nestled in the building's interior, away from the broad glare of daylight. A glassed-in corridor runs along the side like an imperial sunroom, offering a wide-screen view of the city. The architects had planned to cover the glass with an adhesive film that would emulate those early flat-panel computers which could be viewed only head on, and went dark when seen from one side. The film would have allowed a three-foot transparent slice directly in front of each person; a visitor could see the whole panorama incrementally, by walking the hallway's full length, but never in a single sweep of the eye. "For us, it was an opportunity to have a more dynamic and active relationship with the view—not to dispense it all at once but to have it reveal itself slowly," Diller explained. The mayor of Boston stopped by during construction and was appalled that anyone would want to obscure such a spectacular view of his city. The glass was left clear.

"It's not such a big deal," Diller said, after recounting the disagreement for the third time. "We're over it."

Scofidio shrugged. "They'll do one show, and then they'll put the film up."



"Bring me a stem cell."

• •

The space that best represents the firm's conceptual approach to architecture is the I.C.A.'s *médiathèque.* A cabinet-like room drops down like a trapdoor from the underside of the cantilever. Ostensibly, it's a haven for research and electronic art, and it does contain computers. But the real focus is a single window at the bottom of steeply raked bleachers, framing a rectangle of water that appears as a moving, liquid abstraction. Some visitors drift to the lowest level, where the view includes a distant strip of piers, but Diller hates it when they do that.

"I think of the window as the fireplace," Scofidio said. Diller touched him on the elbow and shook her head emphatically: wrong metaphor. "*We* think of it as the ultimate screen saver," she explained. Not coincidentally, the idle computers in the room had images of waves lapping across their screens. On the day that the I.C.A. opened, Diller and Scofidio watched a man wander into the *médiathèque* and stand just where he was supposed to, at the top of the stairs, mesmerized by the slow dance of water and light in the harbor. Finally, he shook his head in wonder, turned to go, and murmured, "It's amazing what you can do with high definition." The architects were thrilled. After all these years, they had finally succeeded in making reality look like an elegant illusion. ♦

STEPHEN MCLAREN, "BRIGHT ON" (2006)

FICTION

HANWELL SENIOR

BY ZADIE SMITH

Hanwell Snr was Hanwell's father. Like Hanwell, he existed in a small way. Not in his person—he was a "big personality," in that odious phrase—but in his history, which is partial, almost phantasmagoric. Even to Hanwell he seemed a kind of mirage, and nothing pleasant about it. A feckless and slapdash man—worse, in many ways, than a cruel man. Those who have experience of such people will understand. Cruelty can be righteously opposed, eventually dismissed. A freewheeling carelessness with your cares is something else again. It must teach you a sad self-sufficiency, being fathered like that, and a brutal reticence of the heart. A reluctance to get going at all.

Hanwell Snr came to Hanwell like a comet, at long intervals. He was there when Hanwell was born, surely, and six years after that on a beach in Brighton, holding Hanwell by the armpits and dangling him over a pier. Hanwell Snr spent that evening away from his family, to whom he gave a little money with the generous idea of a round of fish and chips. It didn't stretch as far as that. A boyo, with charm in spades. That sounds antique, but "boyo" was the word one would have used at the time. First to raise a glass and last to put it down—very much *hail fellow, well met*—although he was never a drunk, and never incompetent. The type to sing along with those far worse gone than himself, with the idea of gaining advantage over them in their weakness. Back at home, he had a machine he put tuppence in and a fag came out, like in a pub. Also, an eye for his wife's nearest neighbor, a widow, Sue Boyd—*Sue, Sue, I'm very much in love with you,* to the tune of a famous ballad of the time, catching her round the waist and waltzing her from the back door to the gate, Mrs. Hanwell smiling helplessly on from the window.

A big man physically, far bigger than Hanwell. And then later, maybe that same year, maybe the next, on November 5th, suddenly at the back door in the blackness with the gift of some penny bangers. He didn't stay to light these with Hanwell. Then gone again. "Went out for a pack of cigarettes and never came back": a common enough refrain in England, then and now. Only, Hanwell Snr was one of the periodic returnees.

PETER MARLOW/MAGNUM PHOTOS

This makes it worse, as previously discussed. Leaving Hanwell standing in the blackness in short trousers holding bangers. This was never forgotten. It persists, a fleck of the late nineteen-twenties. It is recorded here by a descendant of Hanwell Snr of whom he could have had no notion, being as unreal to him as broadband or goblins. No one can explain the process by which these things are retained while much else vanishes—a lot of sentimental rubbish is written on the subject. Hanwell himself kept faith with scientific explanations. He knew nothing whatsoever of science. Dimly, he imagined chemical flareups in the brain chemistry, arresting moving images (his analogy came from photographic film, of which he had some experience), and that these "flareups" are random in their occasion and unobservable at the moment they happen. Of course, the writing of this is also a kind of "flareup," albeit of a sadder, secondary and parasitic kind.

In the mid-thirties, Hanwell Snr went to Canada, an attempt to make his fortune in logging. Hanwell was given a brief, thrilling tour of the ship before it sailed, although not by his father; a crewman put a candle on a thick brass rail and thus demonstrated to Hanwell how crosswise scratches turn orderly and concentric in thrown light. Three years later Hanwell Snr returned, still with no money. He was now able to roll a cigarette with one hand the way the cowboys did. Hanwell was not especially impressed. Subsequently, Hanwell Snr became a conductor on the buses. Then came the war, from which he never really returned, having fallen for a middle-class lady who drove an ambulance. Turned up once at Hanwell's own barracks, with a new name—"Bill"—and the affectations of an Irishman. It was eerie to witness. Words held no security with Hanwell Snr, served as no anchor, bore no relation to the things of the world. A darker shade of this same tendency is called "psychopathy." He took out a few filthy photos from the Far East and told amusing, believable anecdotes set in Kerry. This, to a stranger, would appear to fit well with the copper-wire hair and the close eyes. Hanwell wished himself more of a stranger. As it stood, he could only wince inwardly at this second, false personality, while making a good show of laughing along as Bill made a friend of all the young soldiers whom Hanwell himself had not yet managed to befriend. "Good sort, your old man! Lively, good for a laugh!" Said approvingly, and probably true (Hanwell tried hard to be generous in his interpretations), if you happened not to be his son. *If* you happened not to be his son. Bill walked out two hours later, merry as Christmas. Wasn't seen again by Hanwell for twelve years.

It was August of 1956. Hanwell got word that his father was nicely set up with a little business in an obscure village in the county of Kent. Without any real expectation—or none he could confess to himself—Hanwell got on his bike. This time, *he* would appear. It was nothing to him, back then, to ride from London to Kent. He was young, relatively speaking, though he wouldn't have thought himself especially so, with a young family already. He did not know then that a second family lay in wait for him, not yet sprung, coiled in his future.

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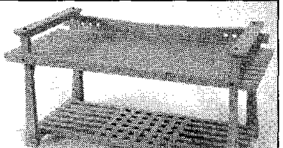

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A roasting August day. Hanwell had devised a water carrier out of an old plastic kerosene bottle and strapped it to the crossbar—an invention a little ahead of its time. He powered along a newly built stretch of the A20, wherever possible nipping off and taking byroads through the villages, feeling that the air was purer there. I hope I can say "hedgerow" and it will be clear that I don't mean to be poetic, but only historically accurate. Hedgerow, thick and briary, caught his shirt twice and made it ragged round the elbow. He had it in his mind—as I have it in mine, with equal stubbornness, when I am writing at length—not to stop before a certain point; he would eat at his destination and not before. One more mile, one more chapter, one more mile, one more chapter. The village was in a little valley; Hanwell swooned round the bends and rolled into town, stopping at the village green, which was all the village there was. Two establishments stood nearby: a redbrick pub with pretty clumps of lavender growing in the window pots and, on the other side of the green, a luridly painted fish-and-chip van. Hanwell knew better than to hope. He got off his bike and pushed it with a sure touch round the perimeter, the faintest pressure of left hand to saddle. It was four o'clock—the van was shut up. He leaned the bike against gypsy-red lettering outlined in gold: "HANWELL'S FINEST FISH AND CHIPS." He went to sit in the grass, beneath a tree, overlooking the cricket pitch and the marshy land near the ponds. He was unable to absorb these various lessons in the color green. Instead, there was smell: sear-leaved, blowsy roses, last of the summer. Collect them, give them to your sister, 1931.

Recipe for Irene Hanwell's Lady's Perfume
Six roses (*stolen, petals removed*)
Water from the tap
Empty milk bottle
Squish petals in fist to release the odor. Put in bottle. Fill with water.

His feet stank. He took off his shoes. At home he had a wife who was not well, not well in a manner he could do nothing about nor understand, but as he sat here now in the sun, the tense, resistant nub of flesh inside his back resolved itself for the first time in months. He lay down. His spine pressed into the soil a notch at a time, undid him. Upside down was a land of female legs. He was fond of these new bell-shaped skirts, wide enough to crawl under and be kept safe, and wished he had waited to marry, or married differently. He thought, What if I stayed here? Let the sun swallow me, and the orange dazzle under my eyelids become not just the thing I see but the thing that I am, and let the one daisy with the bent stem, and the rose smell and the girl upside down on the pub bench eating an upside-down ploughman's with her upside-down friend be the whole of the law and the girth of the world. Wasn't it the work of moments, of a little paint, to change "HANWELL'S FINEST" to "HANWELL AND HANWELL"?

Note: I have reconstituted Hanwell's thoughts for you, as seem likely to me, and as sound nicest. In the novel "Middlemarch," we find the old adage of a man's charity growing in direct proportion to its distance from his own door. This is reminiscent of all the dutiful grandchildren and great-grandchildren lingering over deathbeds with digital recorders, or else manically pursuing their ancestors through the online genealogy sites at three in the morning, so very eager to reconstitute the lives and thoughts of dead and soon-to-be-dead men, though they may regularly screen the phone calls of their own mothers. I am of that generation. I will do anything for my family except see them.

It was 1956, as mentioned above. There was nothing but the sun, and Hanwell and the sun. Lying in a patch of long grass, Hanwell dreamed a conversation:

HANWELL SNR: (*lying beside Hanwell*) So you found me, then.

HANWELL: Yes, Alf. Wasn't I meant to?

HANWELL SNR: Now, look: have a smoke—don't get ahead of yourself.

HANWELL: (*taking a Senior Service from its packet*) Thank you.

HANWELL SNR: So, boy. How are you? I'm doing all right for myself, as you can see.

HANWELL: Ah, yes, indeed, and even so. Thus is it much liketh the great novel by George Eliot—

HANWELL SNR: Oh, don't talk guff, boy. You always do that—pretend you're something you're not and never have been. You never did read any of that. Anyone'd think you'd been up to the university, talking like I don't know what.

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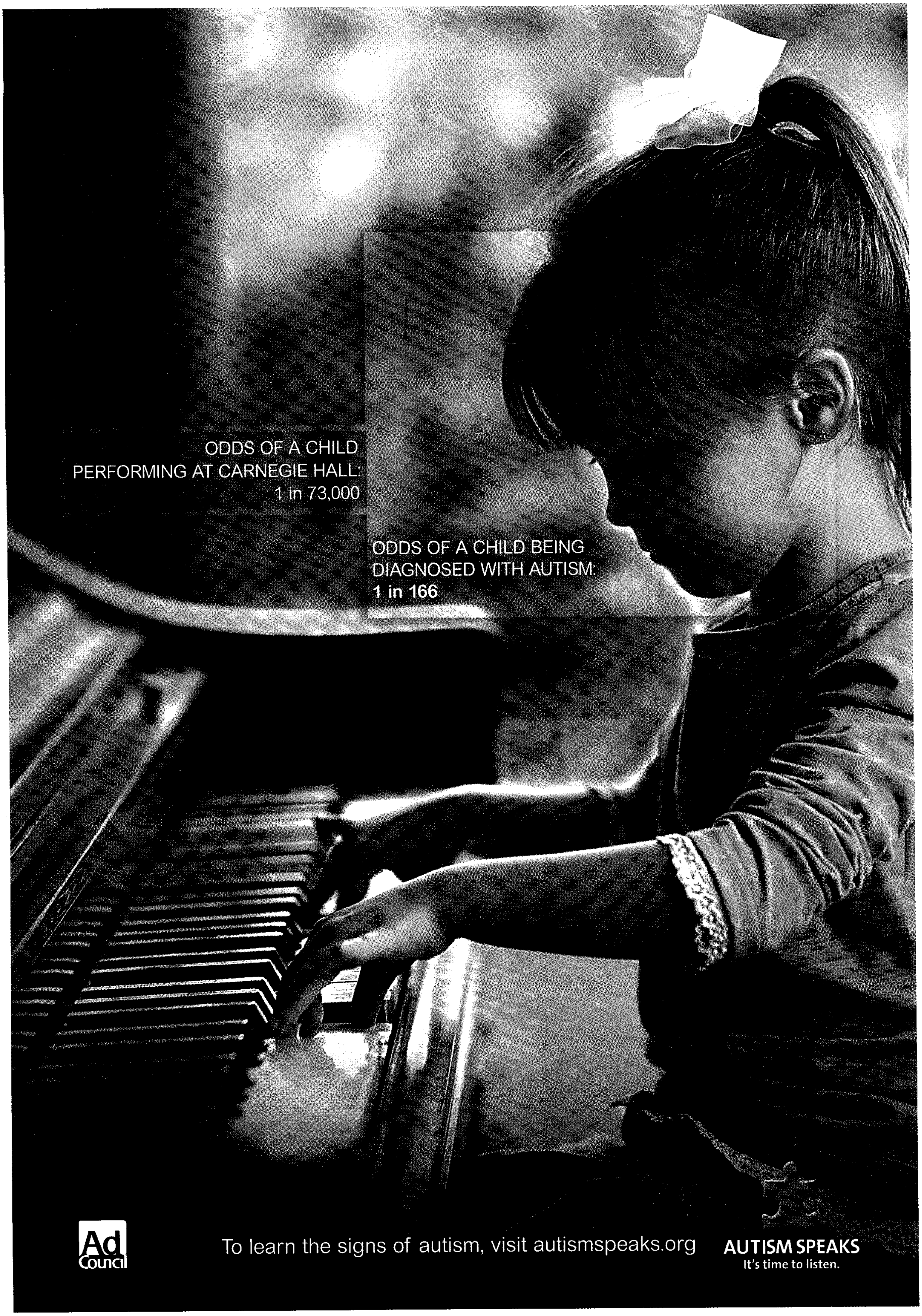

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HANWELL: (*sadly*) We couldn't afford the uniform for the grammar. I passed the eleven-plus, but we couldn't afford it.

HANWELL SNR: (*laughing till he cries*) Still telling that old chestnut? Dear, oh dear. Bit antique that story, isn't it? I'd rather call a spade a spade, let everything come up roses. Well, whatever floats your boat, Hanwell, I'm sure.

HANWELL: (*sung*) I put a chestnut in a boat. . . . I rowed it with a spade. . . . A rose I gave my love that day.

HANWELL SNR: You've gone soft.

"Whose bike is this?"

Hanwell sat up and was greeted—not with any particular surprise, although with a little sheepishness—and offered the first chips out of the fryer, which he accepted.

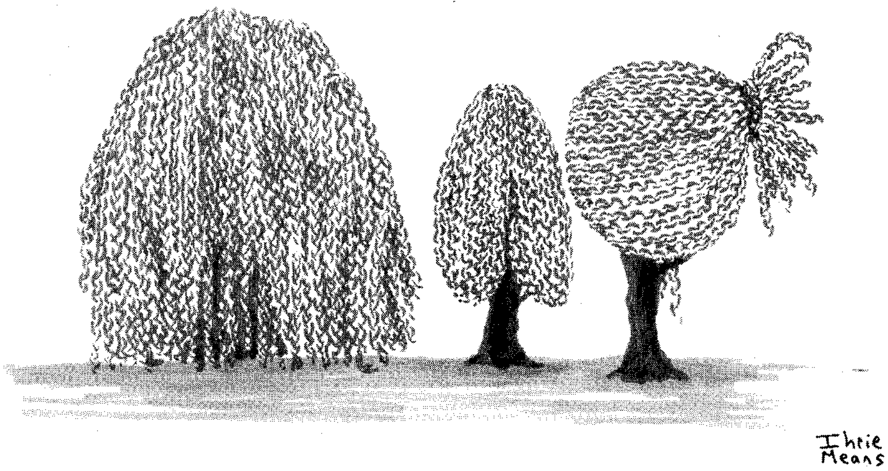
"I've a little foldup table somewhere here. . . . "

Hanwell watched Hanwell Snr struggle with the household bric-a-brac and shabby furniture piled up in the back of the van. A tall lamp with a tasselled shade and a coat stand lay across each other: a coat of arms for the house of Hanwell. The ambulance driver, Bunty, who might have kept things clean for him, had died the year before—her money had bought this little concern. Maybe she had cooked him his greens, too, and watched his drink, and it was only now that the ghastly bloat took hold, and the blood vessels broke and dispersed beneath the skin of the nose and cheeks, and the orange whiskers grew wild and laced with gray. It was a shock. Historically, Hanwell Snr was physically superior to Hanwell: *Sit on my back—go on, sit on it! You won't break me!* Usually said to a lady, and then when she was settled like the Buddha he'd do a press-up or two, sometimes five. Now he turned, holding the little table upside down against his vast belly, and this soft thing, more than all the rest, announced him as a man deserted by women.

"There we are"—his great arse pressed on the tabletop; the cast-iron legs sunk deep into the lawn—"I don't believe in standing and eating."

He brought out two little stools, and Hanwell sat on the one handed to him. For a time, Hanwell Snr made his own reluctance to sit appear quite natural, busying himself with the hot oil and dismissing certain chips as not fit to be thrown in the fryer if his only son was to eat them. When the fuss of frying was over, Hanwell realized the obvious: his father couldn't stand to look at him. They remained looking out on the meadow beyond the green, Hanwell Snr leaning against the van, despite his beliefs, with his sweaty cone of newspaper and chewing each chip a long time. He looked across Hanwell if Hanwell spoke, but never at him.

Of their conversation, Hanwell could retain practically nothing, finding it quite as unreal as their dream talk earlier. While Hanwell silently pursued a series of unlikely but longed-for confessions (*Well, son, the thing is . . . To tell you the truth, I regret terribly . . .*), in the real, thick ripple of the air Hanwell Snr was sweating and rambling about the Suez business and the Araby bastards and other matters of the world that Hanwell—the least political of men, a man for whom the world was, and could consist only of, those people he saw or spoke to every day, fed, washed, or made love to—could not comprehend. At



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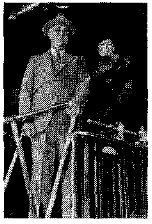

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last the topic turned to the people who concerned Hanwell—Hanwell's wife, Hanwell's daughters. Hanwell shyly described his current difficulty, making use of the doctor's careful and superior phrases ("mental disturbance" and "a tendency toward hysteria"). Hanwell Snr took a hankie from his back pocket, worked it round the grime on the back of his neck. He took his time folding it back into quarters. Hanwell saw at once that his father thought it entirely typical of Hanwell to marry a woman who was broken in some way, and now felt much the same satirical disgust he'd expressed when the boy Hanwell, instead of laughing at being dangled from a pier, took it in his head to cry.

"Well, I'll say this," he said, finishing his lecture about Hanwell's ineptitude at *choosing things right and seeing the way of things*, and moving on to the more general subject of "women," which allowed, at least, the concession that Hanwell's trouble might not be Hanwell's fault alone: "They rewrite history—can't let a man be himself. Always telling you what you *would* be and *should* be and *might* be, rather than what you *are*. And what they're offering in return for all that isn't half as good as *they* think it is—or I've never found it so. But maybe you've done better—Lord knows, they look a damn sight better these days than in my day. . . ."

Twenty yards from where they sat, two young women in sundresses were helping each other achieve a handstand. Hanwell Snr nudged Hanwell in his gut, and Hanwell felt strongly the implicit insult to his own mother, who still lived, and still wore her flapper curls—white now—close to her forehead, and the same heavy cloche felt caps and Harold Lloyd glasses, perfectly round and thick-rimmed. He said nothing. He ate his chips as the blond, peaky-looking girl firmed her body in preparation for the arrival of the lovely thick ankles of the brunette, well fed as they never were ten years earlier, and when this brunette overreached, and her breasts pressed tight against the cotton of her yellow dress and her legs went backward, and the crinoline frothed over her blond friend's narrow shoulders, Hanwell and Hanwell watched them laugh and shake together and fall, finally, in a human heap on the grass. Soon after, Hanwell Snr gathered the two empty paper cones and pressed them into a soggy ball in his hands, and said he'd better open the shutters, as it was teatime and folk would be wanting their food. Hanwell never saw him again.

On a date in 1986, one that only the record office would remember now, the phone rang in Hanwell's kitchen as he cooked. He was making pizza with homemade dough for the young children of his second family, and his topping was a loose, watery, fresh tomato sauce, laced with anchovies and black olives, so piquant and delicious you could eat it by the spoonful and forgo the crust altogether. It is possible only I liked to do that. I extrapolate my feelings too generally.

"Yes, I see—thank you . . . it was good of you to let us know," said Hanwell in a voice a shade more posh than his own. He put down the phone and left the room. After the pizza was finished, he came back in, pale, but composed. He said his father had died, a sentence that required us—my mother, my brother, and me—to invent a whole human in one second and kill him off the next. Hanwell had said nothing to prepare us. He had known weeks earlier that his father's death was imminent—he did not go to him. Twenty years later, Hanwell's son would not go to Hanwell when his hour came. It happens that in the course of my professional duties I am often found making the statement "I don't believe in patterns." A butterfly on a pin has no idea what a pretty shape it makes.

"He never settled," said Hanwell, "and now he's come to the end of the road," a quaint metaphor, like those that Borges enjoyed, and we, equally, interpreted it literally, thinking of Brighton pier, Brighton being Hanwell country for us, and the place where Hanwell's people generally died. When I was a kid, I had a dream—never forgotten!—of the cool, flat Brighton pebbles being placed over my body, as the Jews place stones on top of their dead; piled up and up over my corpse, until I was entirely buried and families came to picnic over me, not knowing, for I was Brighton bedrock now, as Hanwells had been (in my dream logic) since there were Hanwells in England. There have always been Hanwells in England. But I am a female Hanwell and lost my name when I married. ♦

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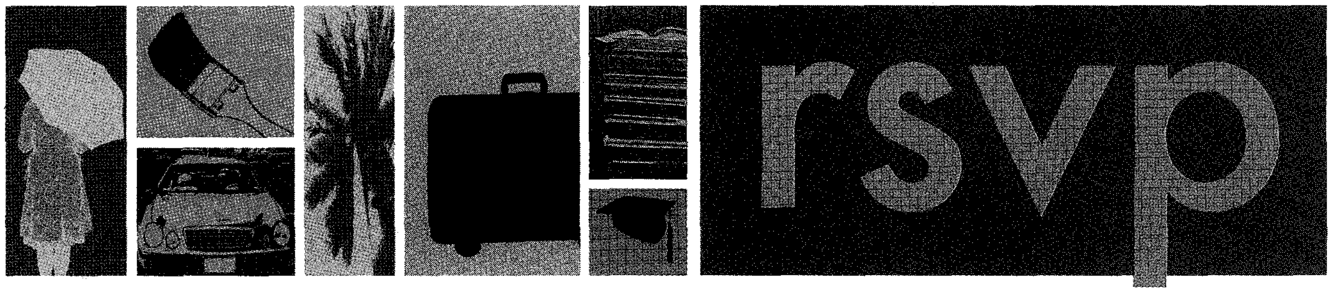

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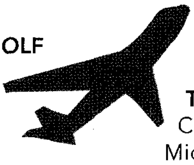

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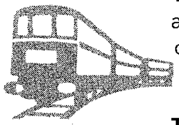

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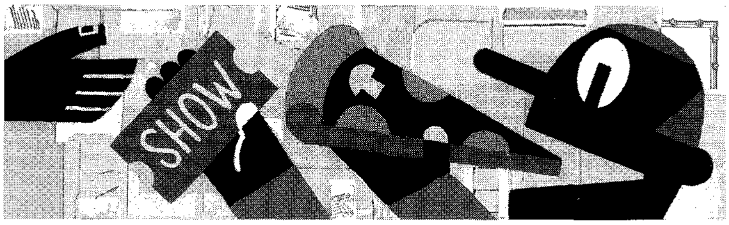


BOOKS

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

How uses, not innovations, drive human technology.

BY STEVEN SHAPIN

I'm writing in the kitchen, surrounded by technology. There is a cordless phone, a microwave oven, and a high-end refrigerator, and I'm working on a laptop. Nearby is a gas range, a French cast-iron enamelled casserole, and a ceramic teapot. Drawers to my left hold cutlery—some modern Chinese-made stainless steel, some Georgian sterling silver. In front of me is a wooden bookstand, made for me by a talented friend and festooned with Post-it reminders of things to do (a method I prefer to my digital calendar). I'm sitting on a semi-antique wooden chair, though when my back is hurting I tend to switch to a new, expensive ergonomic contraption.

Perhaps you think I should have said that I'm surrounded by *things*, only some of which really count as technology. It's common to think of technology as encompassing only very new, science-intensive things—ones with electronic or digital bits, for instance. But it's also possible to view it just as things (or, indeed, processes) that enable us to perform tasks more effectively than we could without them. The technologies that we have available substantially define who we are. The nineteenth-century Scottish essayist Thomas Carlyle didn't much like the new industrial order, but he did understand the substantive relationship between human beings and their technologies: "Man is a Tool-using Animal. . . . Nowhere do you find him without Tools; without Tools he is nothing, with Tools he is all." Seen in this light, my kitchen is a technological palimpsest. Even the older items were once innovations—like my Brown Betty teapot, whose design goes back to the seventeenth century but which is still produced in England, not having been significantly improved on since. And even the newest items contain design or functional elements from the past, such as the QWERTY keyboard of my laptop, patented in 1878.

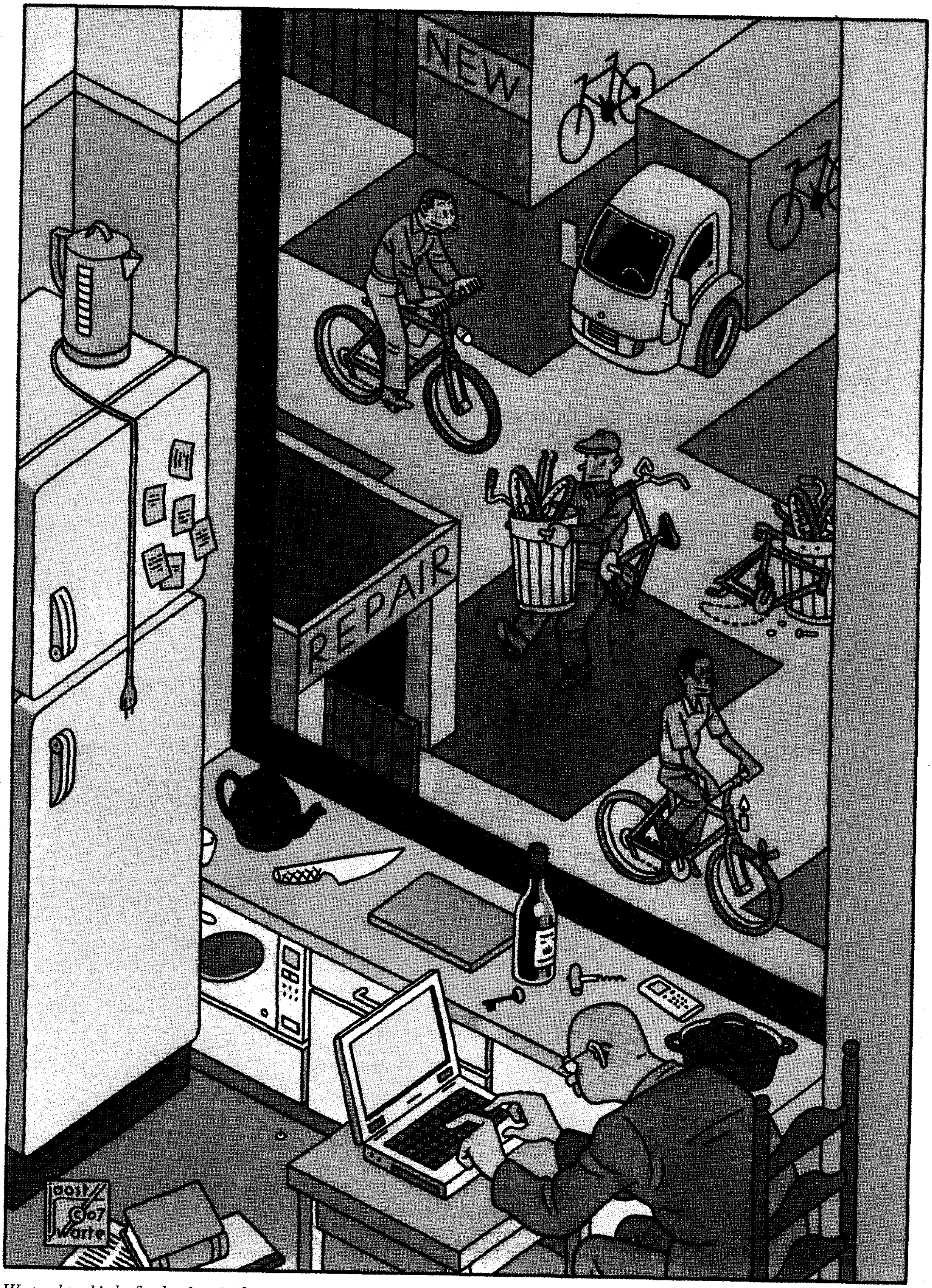
The way we think about technology tends to elide the older things, even though the texture of our lives would be unrecognizable without them. And when we do consider technology in historical terms we customarily see it as a driving force of progress: every so often, it seems, an innovation—the steam engine, electricity, computers—brings a new age into being. In "The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History Since 1900" (Oxford; $26), David Edgerton, a well-known British historian of modern military and industrial technology, offers a vigorous assault on this narrative. He thinks that traditional ways of understanding technology, technological change, and the role of technology in our lives, have been severely distorted by what he calls "the innovation-centric account" of technology. The book is a provocative, concise, and elegant exercise in intellectual Protestantism, enthusiastically nailing its iconoclastic theses on the door of the Church of Technological Hype: no one is very good at predicting technological futures; new and old technologies coexist; and technological significance and technological novelty are rarely the same—indeed, a given technology's grip on our awareness is often in inverse relationship to its significance in our lives. Above all, Edgerton says that we are wrong to associate technology solely with invention, and that we should think of it, rather, as evolving through use. A "history of technology-in-use," he writes, yields "a radically different picture of technology, and indeed of invention and innovation."

Consider the Second World War. When we think about the technologies that figured large in it, what comes to mind? Perhaps Germany's V-2 terror weapons, with their emblematic role in Thomas Pynchon's "A screaming comes across the sky." Or the triumph of theoretical physics and metallurgical engineering at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These are the things that capture the imagination, and yet Edgerton offers an arrestingly different perspective, calling German investment in the V-2 project "economically and militarily irrational." One historian wrote that "more people died producing it than died from being hit by it." Edgerton estimates that although the Germans spent five hundred million dollars on the project, "the destructive power of *all* the V-2s produced amounted to less than could be achieved by a single raid on a city by the RAF." Similarly, considering the cost of the atomic bomb against the conventional weaponry that could have been bought for the same money, "it is not difficult to imagine what thousands more B-29s, one-third more tanks or five times more artillery, or some other military output, would have done to Allied fighting power."

So what forms of technology really pulled their weight in the war? Horse-powered transport, for one. Long past the age of steam—and well into the age of automobiles and aviation—the power of horseflesh remained critical. In the Italian campaign alone, the United States Army's 10th Mountain Division used more than ten thousand horses and mules, and the great tank general George S. Patton wished he'd had many more:

> In almost any conceivable theater of operations, situations arise where the presence of horse cavalry, in a ratio of a division to an army, will be of vital moment. . . . Had we possessed an American cavalry division with pack artillery in Tunisia and in Sicily, not a German would have escaped, because horse

JOOST SWARTE


NEW
REPAIR
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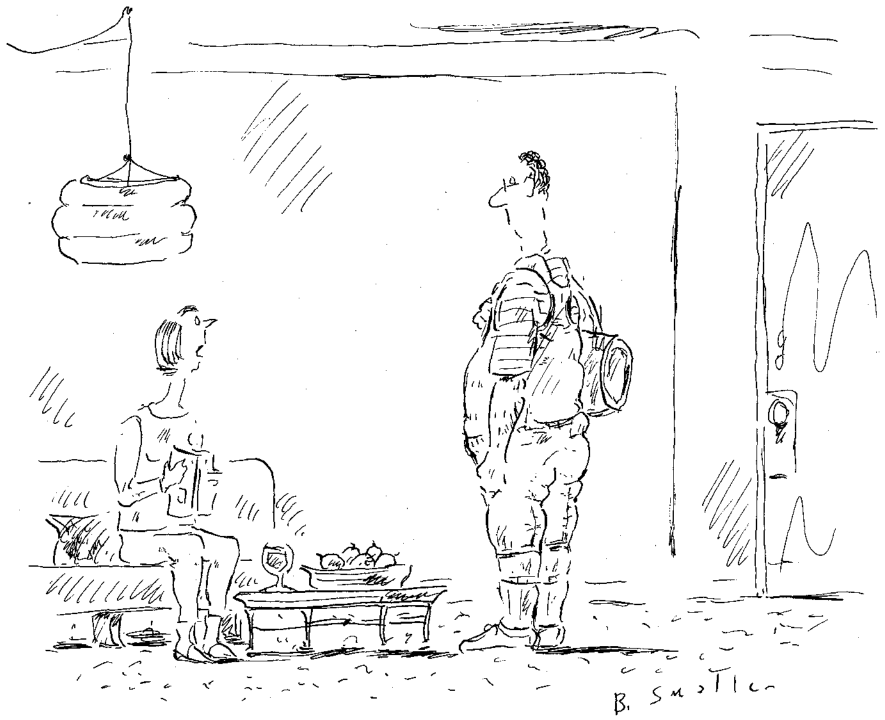
We tend to think of technology in futuristic terms, barely noticing many older technologies so ubiquitous as to be almost invisible.



"Can't you take up some kind of sport that doesn't involve spandex?"

> cavalry possesses the additional gear ratio which permits it to attain sufficient speed through mountainous country to get behind and hold the enemy until the more powerful infantry and tanks can come up and destroy him.

The Germans were better supplied: at the beginning of 1945, the Wehrmacht had 1.2 million horses in its ranks, and, altogether, the Germans lost some 1.5 million horses during the war.

Even today, horses aren't quite history. In Afghanistan, the American Special Forces have had to rediscover how to use them. "Horses are actually an ideal way to get around there," one correspondent embedded with the Green Berets has said. "No manual has ever been written on how to coordinate horse attacks with B-52s, so the Green Berets had to do OJT"—on-the-job training. "Early on, there was a cavalry charge with about three hundred horses where they had cut it so fine that as soon as the bombs hit the ridge the horses were riding through the gray smoke; it was quite an impressive sight."

Technological palimpsests are everywhere; it's the normal state of things. Darfurians are being slaughtered by Janjaweed militia mounted on horses and camels, while their Sudanese-government sponsors chip in with helicopters and Antonov cargo planes retrofitted as bombers. September 11th was a technological pastiche of new and old technologies (Boeings and box cutters), as was the 2003 Iraq invasion (stealth fighters, cruise missiles, and laser-guided smart bombs for the "shock and awe," and jury-rigged sandbags and scrap-metal armor for Army Humvees when the Pentagon failed to provide high-tech alternatives). The Iraqi insurgents have revived the use of chlorine gas as a terror agent, a technology pioneered by patriotic German chemists in the First World War, and Saddam Hussein, whose aircraft dropped modern nerve-gas bombs on the Kurdish town of Halabja, was executed by hanging, a technology of judicial killing that goes back to the ancient Persian Empire.

Edgerton calls the tendency to overrate the impact of dramatic new technologies "futurism." Few things, it turns out, are as passé as past futures. In the mid-twentieth century, a world was promised in which nuclear power would provide electricity "too cheap to meter," eliminating pollution, forestalling energy crises, and alleviating world poverty; hypersonic civil air travel would whip masses of us around the globe in an hour or two; permanent settlements would be established not just on the moon but on the planets; nuclear weapons would put an end to war.

And so it goes. The "paperless office" was celebrated as long ago as 1975, in *Business Week*, but since then we've had avalanches of the stuff: global consumption of paper has tripled in the past three decades, and the average American worker now goes through twelve thousand sheets of paper every year. In 1987, Ronald Reagan announced that high-temperature superconductor technology would "bring us to the threshold of a new age," but commercializing that technology has proved much more difficult than the original hype suggested. In 2000, Bill Clinton speculated that, as a direct result of the Human Genome Project, "our children's children will know the term 'cancer' only as a constellation of stars." (That would be nice, if only because it would indicate an improved knowledge of astronomy.) Predictions like these don't inspire great confidence in the utopian futures now being spun around stem-cell research or nanotechnology.

But neither should we have great confidence in the more dire prophesies. In the middle of the nineteenth century, it was thought that railways would whirl people about the world with such vertiginous speed that their nervous systems could collapse under the strain. Decades later, it seemed that the telephone would be a socially disruptive force, causing aural communication to take place without any of the rich cues of face-to-face interaction, breaking down the barriers between public and private space, and making it intolerably hard not to be "at home" when one *was* at home.

Learning how to make new technologies is one thing; learning how, as a society, to use them is another. Carolyn Marvin's illuminating book "When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century" (1988) notes that, during the early years of the telephone, there was confusion about what codes should regulate faceless and socially clueless speech. The telephone operator, typically female, often had the responsibility of waking up the master of the house, and so joined the wife as a woman who could talk to the man in bed; Marvin writes that "sweet-voiced" telephone girls at the turn of the century "were often objects of fantasy." It was also thought that, if just anyone could use the new device, its utility would be completely undermined. Marvin notes the firm opinion of the British postmaster general in 1895 that "the telephone could not, and never would be an advantage which could be enjoyed by the large mass of the people." He was wrong, but understandably so. The story of how we came to terms with the new technology—how we adjusted to it, adapted to it, domesticated it, altered it to suit our purposes—didn't come with the technical spec sheet. It never does. No instruction manual can explain how a technology will evolve, in use, together with the rhythm of our lives.

Old technologies persist; they even flourish. In that sense, they're as much a part of the present as recently invented technologies. It is said that we live in a "new economy," yet, of the world's top thirty companies (by revenue), only three are mainly in the business of high tech—General Electric (No. 11), Siemens (No. 22), and I.B.M. (No. 29)—and all three go back more than a century. The heights of the early-twenty-first-century corporate world are still occupied—as they have long been—by petroleum companies (Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, and B.P., Nos. 1, 3, and 4), retailing (Wal-Mart, No. 2), automobiles (General Motors, No. 5), and finance (I.N.G. and Citigroup, Nos. 13 and 14). No Hewlett-Packard (No. 33); no Microsoft (No. 140); no Merck (No. 289).

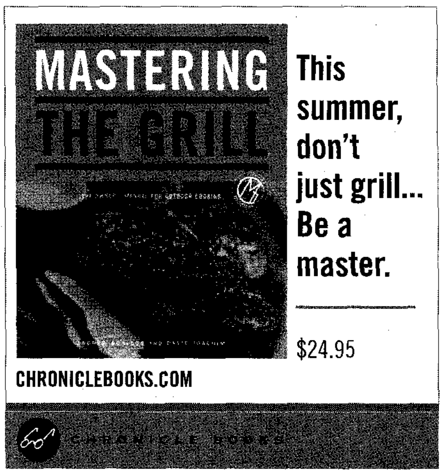
The tendency to exaggerate the impact of technological innovation follows from an artifact of historical consciousness. When we cannot conceive what life would be like without e-mail, say, we correctly note the pervasiveness of the new technology, but we may incorrectly assume that the things we now do through e-mail could *not* have been done in other ways. Of course, we must know that many things now done through e-mail were once done, and to some extent are still done, by telephone, fax, snail mail, or actually stopping by to see someone. But we can never know how the technologies that existed before electronic communication would have developed had e-mail not become dominant, or what other technologies might have come along whose development was forestalled by e-mail.

In 1897, to move mail around the city, Manhattan started to equip itself with an island-wide system of underground pneumatic tubes, which soon extended from 125th Street as far as the Brooklyn General Post Office. Through the nineteenth century, the pneumatic tube had developed roughly in step with the telegraph and then the telephone. For a long time, indeed, pneumatic tubes seemed promising—perhaps they could shunt people around as well as mail—although, ultimately, it was the telegraph and the telephone that flourished, becoming the ancestors of the electronic communication systems we use today. Yet, had there been a century of continuous improvement, who knows what benefits a dense and speedy system of message tubes might have brought? A man working on Eighty-sixth Street could send a scribbled note, chocolates, and a pair of earrings to his girlfriend on Wall Street. To have left your wallet at home could be a mistake remedied in seconds. It's a safe guess, anyway, that, while aware of a distant past containing such figures as postmen and delivery boys, we would be unable to imagine life without the pneumatic tube.

This kind of counterfactual history has a credibility handicap—we know how things did turn out but can only imagine how they might have turned out. Still, there's no reason to assume that the technology we have is the only technology we could have had. The birth-control pill, we say, caused a sexual revolution, and perhaps that's true. But it joined (and only partly replaced) many other methods of contraception, some of which—like the condom—have continued to improve in all sorts of ways since the advent of the pill. And it has been argued that the pill had a dampening effect on the development of other technologies, such as male hormonal contraceptives. Is the pill the best possible outcome? The answer depends on who you are, what you want to do, and the resources you command. As it turned out, the replacement of the condom as a sexual technology, so frequently announced in past decades, was premature. The emergence of AIDS caused condom sales to more than double between the early nineteen-eighties and the mid-nineties. And, for the first time, the old technology of the condom enjoyed an advantage previously monopolized by the new technology of the pill: it could be freely talked about in polite society.

Our obsession with innovation also blinds us to how much of technology is focussed on keeping things the same. The dikes of Holland maintain the integrity of the nation, and great ingenuity goes into preserving and improving them. We're going to need a lot more, and more powerful, technologies of conservation: not just the technologies of levees and barriers against the ocean but technologies to maintain the supply of potable water, breathable air, and arable soil; technologies to maintain as much biodiversity as we can or want to maintain; technologies to preserve and renew our crumbling Victorian legacies of infrastructure (sewers, rail beds, roads, and bridges); technologies to stabilize and prevent the dispersal of radioactive waste. There may be hype attending new technological artifacts, but there's money to be made, and spent, in maintaining them in usable shape. According to Edgerton, the take-home price of a P.C. is typically only about ten per cent of its lifetime cost, and sixty per cent of the lifetime cost of some military equipment is maintenance. The federal government spends twice as much on preserving highways as it does on building new ones. More than half of automobile-dealer profits come from servicing cars, less than a third from selling new cars, and much the same is true of the civil jet-engine business.

The importance of maintenance becomes even clearer if we take a global view. Edgerton notes that as things get older they tend to move from rich countries to poor ones, from low-maintenance to high-maintenance environments. In many African, South Asian, and Latin-American countries, used vehicles imported from North America, Western Europe, and Japan live on almost eternally, in constant contact with numerous repair shops. Maintenance doesn't simply mean keeping those vehicles as they were; it may mean changing them in all sorts of ways—new gaskets made from old rubber, new fuses made from scrap copper wire. "In the innovation-centric account, most places have no history of technology," Edgerton writes. "In use-centered accounts, nearly everywhere does." John Powell's marvellous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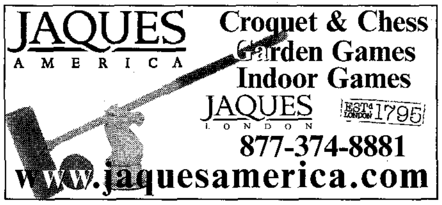
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study of vast vehicle-repair shops in Ghana, "The Survival of the Fitter: Lives of Some African Engineers" (1995), describes a modern world in which vehicles imported from the developed world initially decay, and then something changes: "As time goes by and the vehicle is reworked in the local system, it reaches a state of apparent equilibrium in which it seems to be maintained indefinitely. . . . It is a condition of maintenance by constant repair." Much of the world's mechanical ingenuity is devoted to creating robust, reliable, and highly adapted "creole" technologies, an ingenuity that is largely invisible to us only because we happen to live in a low-maintenance, high-throwaway regime.

Maintenance has implications for the identity of technological artifacts. There's a traditional conundrum about "my grandfather's axe": over its lifetime, it has had three new heads and four new handles, but—its owner insists—it remains his grandfather's axe. Philosophers have their proprietary version of the axe problem: "Locke's socks" developed a hole, which he had darned, and then darned again. The socks kept the philosopher's feet warm, but they troubled his head. Many people make their living repairing things; a very few make their living pondering whether repaired things are the same. But the identity of repaired and maintained things is not just a philosophical problem. The Bush Administration recently decided to build something called the Reliable Replacement Warhead, or R.R.W., a revised design for such weapons as the W76 thermonuclear warhead on submarine-based Trident missiles. The Administration argues that the technology is based on previously tested components and is just an updated version of the same thing. Critics disagree, seeing this as a new weapon that might be used to justify renewed testing. So judgments of whether the R.R.W. is or is not "the same" technology may well become central to whether or not there will be yet another post-Cold War round of the expensive and dangerous nuclear-arms race.

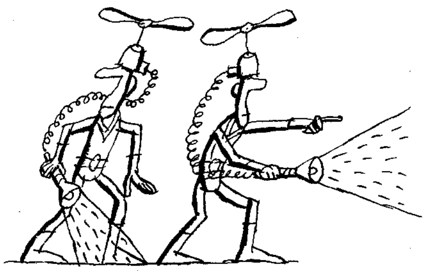
The astronomer Carl Sagan once said, "We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology, in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology." If he meant that we are unfamiliar with the principles on which the technology around us works, he was right—there's an enormous gap between the knowledge of makers and the knowledge of users—but this is exactly as it should be. As users, we typically want our technology to be a black box; we don't want to be bothered with adjusting it, monitoring it, repairing it, or knowing about its inner workings. A sure sign of the success of a technology is that we scarcely think of it as technology at all. The Brown Betty teapot is very old and seemingly simple. Its design is superbly adapted to its function, but I cannot give an account of how its composition and its shape help it to brew a really good cup of tea. Does this mean that I know nothing about the teapot—or, for that matter, the phone or the fridge?

Knowing about technology is not the same thing as understanding the scientific theories involved. Just as innovators commonly understand the fundamentals of a technology better than subsequent users, so users can acquire knowledge that would never have occurred to the innovators. In 1817, Thomas Broadwood, a vastly successful English piano manufacturer, visited Beethoven in Vienna and, shortly after, sent the composer a top-of-the-line instrument. Which of these two men understood the piano better—the craftsman-entrepreneur whose product adorned drawing rooms throughout Europe or the deaf genius whose works are a glory of piano repertoire? Or, for that matter, Liszt, who later owned the piano, and could do things at the keyboard that no performer previously could, or the curator in the museum where it resides today? The piano is one thing to a pianist, another to a piano tuner, another to an interior designer with no interest in music, and yet another to a child who wants to avoid practicing. Ultimately, the narrative of what kind of thing a piano is must be a story of all these users. It's a narrative in which we turn out to know a surprising amount about the technologies that have infiltrated our lives, and in which knowing only as much as we want and need to know about them is, in a sense, to know a lot. "The Shock of the Old" is a necessary reminder of just how important things are in our lives, and how important we are in the life of things. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Love and War in California, *by Oakley Hall (St. Martin's; $24.95).* Hall's new novel comprises three discrete sections. The first, "Gates of Bone," follows the narrator, Payton Daltrey, from his time as a college student and aspiring writer in San Diego, in the months after Pearl Harbor, to his enlistment in the Army. The second section consists of snapshots of his war experiences, at the Battle of the Bulge and the freeing of Frigga. The third charts his success, forty years later, as the author of "Gates of Bone." The self-reflective device works brilliantly: enlistment jarringly cuts off an urgent account of the sufferings of Daltrey's "powerless" acquaintances—a Japanese football buddy sent to a relocation camp, a girlfriend forced to seek an abortion in Tijuana—caused by oppressive social forces. The story's resolution, in the final section, offers a sort of moral and artistic redemption.

Delirium, *by Laura Restrepo, translated from the Spanish by Natasha Wimmer (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday; $23.95).* Set in mid-nineteen-eighties Bogotá, this novel begins when an unemployed professor, Aguilar, returns from a short trip to find his wife, Agustina, incoherent and deranged, with a strange man in a hotel room. Intertwined with his search for the cause of her madness are two lurid narratives: that of a grandiose money launderer employed by Pablo Escobar, and Agustina's fractured recollections of her troubled, if privileged, childhood. Although the ending feels somewhat hasty, Restrepo writes with a sinister lyricism and a dry, leavening wit, detailing the ways in which money, power, and corruption have scourged the fragile Agustina and her city.



The Making of Victorian Values, *by Ben Wilson (Penguin Press; $27.95).* Wilson tracks the emergence of Victorian *pudeur* from the looser, libertine Britain that preceded the Napoleonic Wars. Years of war and economic decline produced a national mood of "fear and anxiety," mobilizing evangelical organizations, amateur social scientists, and reactionary newspapers to call for "moral reform and public rectitude." Others fought vigorously against the encroaching spirit of regulation, frequently charging the moralizers with hypocrisy: a willful attempt to suppress the natural—and particularly English—instincts for individual liberty. Wilson marshals a vast number of entertaining stories of reaction and rebellion, including ready-mades from the life of Lord Byron and a fascinating excursus on audience protests of rising theatre-ticket prices. His archival zeal, however, outstrips his synthetic abilities; much of the detail seems extraneous and the argument itself is somewhat familiar.

The Last Mughal, *by William Dalrymple (Knopf; $30).* In 1857, after a number of high-caste Hindu sepoys rose up against their colonial masters, the British came close to being pushed out of India. This history, drawing on a substantial trove of documents in English, Persian, and Urdu, re-creates daily life in Delhi before and during the uprising, and charts the subsequent fall of the Muslim Mughal dynasty. The elderly emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar II, had overseen a renaissance in Mughal arts and literature, but the British increasingly limited his power to the royal court within Delhi's Red Fort. By lending support to the rebellious sepoys and the Muslim jihadis who were aligned with them, Zafar may have thought that he was insuring a glorious future for his dynasty. Instead, he guaranteed its destruction: the British conquered Delhi after a four-month siege. The book makes clear the dangers of colonial powers' inattentiveness to the dissatisfactions of those they rule, and the human costs of answering one atrocity with another.

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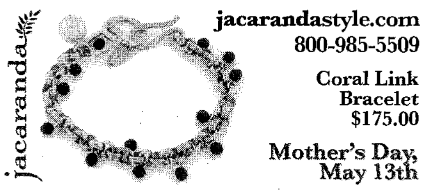

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THE THEATRE

LOST IN THE STARS

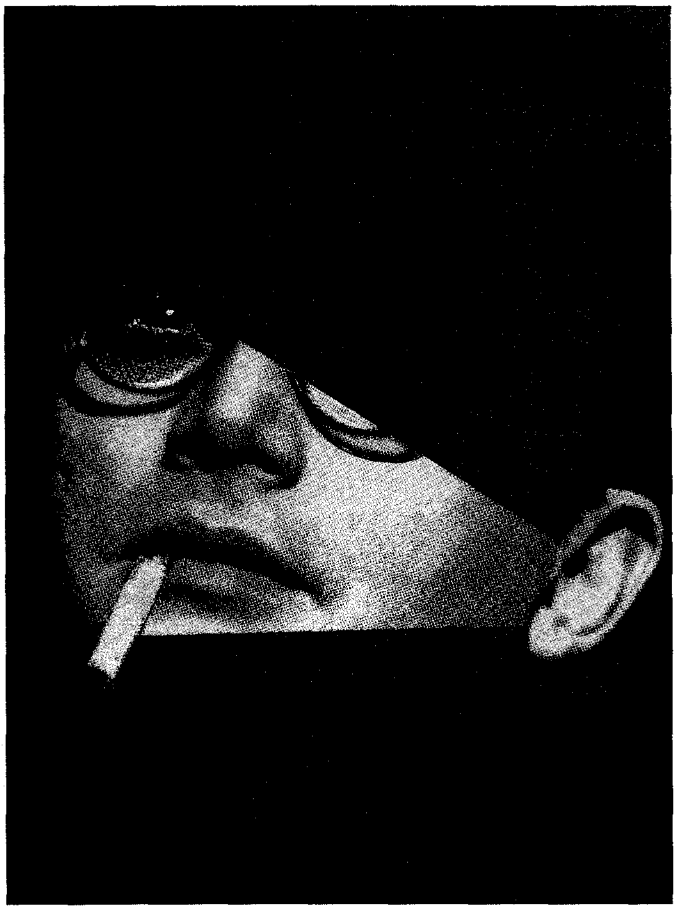
An attempt to revive Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya.

BY HILTON ALS

Lotte Lenya: four blunt syllables that connote not only an era but a style. Born Karoline Wilhelmine Charlotte Blamauer in 1898, the working-class Viennese girl was reared as a Catholic but, in an effort to escape her alcoholic father's abusive ways, made her early living as a whore. By the time she was fourteen, young Karoline was expert at becoming whoever her johns paid her to be. But she always kept her eyes on the stars: she dreamed of becoming a performer. To that end, she moved to Zurich, in 1914, where she studied classical movement and the Dalcroze method of dance—a bit of modern gymnastics whipped, like an egg, into the soufflé world of tutus.

Determination marked her days. ("As soon as my feet hit the stage—I am safe," she wrote.) Her will to be known was all-encompassing. By 1921, she was in Berlin, where she met her future collaborators: the Jewish composer Kurt Weill and the Marxist poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht. Unlike most flashy chorines, including her contemporary Marlene Dietrich, Lotte Lenya, as she now called herself, could not rely on simple prettiness to attract male attention. Instead, with her wide mouth and prominent teeth, the burgeoning performer *acted* her songs, projecting a kind of low-down, high-minded aesthetic: she was a girl of the streets who used her intelligence to stay afloat in an economically depressed country that was still recovering from one war while preparing for the next.

In 1926, Lenya married Weill, whose interest in atonal syncopation and the rhythms of American jazz, as filtered through the work of the composer Arnold Schoenberg, had already inspired Berlin's musical circles. But it was with Brecht that Weill first experienced wide-ranging success. Together, in 1928, the two men wrote "The Threepenny Opera," the second of their three masterpieces about urban decay and the price the soul pays for living in the modern world. (The first was their 1927 Songspiel, "Mahagonny.") No performer captured the cynical rot at the heart of the Brecht-Weill works better than Lenya. Untrained as a singer, she put the songs over by combining her knowledge of the world with the composers'.



Donna Murphy and Michael Cerveris in "LoveMusik."

ANDRZEJ KLIMOWSKI

Any theatrical dramatization of Weill and Lenya's marriage, such as "LoveMusik" (a Manhattan Theatre Club production at the Biltmore), should really be about two things: a performer's allure and an artist's thought process. Neither, however, is inherently dramatic, and Alfred Uhry, who wrote "LoveMusik," and the legendary Harold Prince, who directed it, rely on a great deal of explication to get their points across. Employing techniques that Brecht made famous in his Epic Theatre—projecting slides that announce the setting for the action we are about to see, punctuating the drama with Weill's songs—Prince clearly knows what he's doing. But one can't help feeling that, for the most part, he's dressing up a turkey. "LoveMusik," despite its great performers, great music, and great director, is pure packaging.

It's 1924. Lotte Lenya (Donna Murphy) is working as a maid at a lakeside house. She has been asked to pick up a young composer named Kurt Weill (Michael Cerveris), who is waiting at the jetty. Dressed in rabbinical-looking clothes—dark hat, dark suit—the bespectacled Weill is all fumbling hesitation, while Lenya, in a light-colored dress, is all legs and suggestion. (Before the trip across the lake is over, Lenya has shown Weill some of her hidden talents.) By drawing such marked contrasts between his characters, Prince means to illustrate their differences: Lenya is nature; Weill is mind. But, as even the most cursory reading of "Speak Low (When You Speak Love)"—the 1996 collection of the Weill-Lenya letters on which Uhry, in part, relied for his script—makes clear, the composer was not particularly modest; he was a "naturist," or occasional nudist. Evidently, Prince and Uhry, who make the same reductive distinctions—between the liberated and the repressed, the lighthearted and the gloomy, the free-spirited and the cerebral—throughout the show, believe that the subtlety and intelligence that the real Weill and Lenya brought to their work wouldn't fly on Broadway, would be deemed too "European."

After the success of "The Threepenny Opera," Weill and Lenya escape the rapidly approaching war by moving to the New World. In New York, Weill becomes a theatrical composer of note, while Lenya's career goes into something of a decline. (She gets work in a cabaret, but largely because she sings Weill's songs.) And even though we're an hour and a half into a two-hour-and-forty-minute production, we can't help thinking that the play could have begun here, with the drama of the two formidable Teutonic artists struggling to find their way amid the glaring billboards and the American penchant to please. From time to time, Brecht (the ferociously energetic David Pittu) becomes involved in the action, but he's mostly just a punch line: a loud, sweaty German who gets on the Weills' nerves, first in Berlin, and then in America, where he refuses to change his cagey, nasty ways. This is precisely the kind of xenophobia that makes seeing "LoveMusik" a disquieting experience—and a telling one. For instance, while American audiences embraced Marlene Dietrich, they had a harder time with Lenya. Dietrich played the exotic to the hilt, whereas Lenya was simply herself—which meant that she was not always appealing. (In later years, she had her biggest movie success as a villainous Russian secret agent in the 1963 James Bond caper "From Russia with Love.") This is not explained in the show, but Murphy should be familiar with her character's context. Instead, she tries to be adorable, to charm the audience. She desperately wants to be liked as a performer, and she can't quite grasp a character who doesn't project an atmosphere of health and good will. Lenya understood that, while looks fade, style doesn't. Murphy doesn't get any of Lenya's physical attributes right, either. She speaks with her lips pursed, and when she wants to convey Lenya's careless attitude she simply slouches or slows down. The real Lenya, singing Brecht's lyrics with her sad trumpet of a voice, knew how to show us how life had beaten her up.

Michael Cerveris is equally miscast. He's too powerful for the part of Weill, a retiring man who worked and smoked his way to an early grave. (He died of a heart attack at the age of fifty, in 1950.) Watching Cerveris trying to hold himself back in the role is like watching a Great Dane trying to hide in a corner. Like Murphy, Cerveris makes sure to give his "W"s a "V" sound, lest we forget that he's German, but in him the effect is even odder—like an American doughboy imitating the "Krauts" at a bond rally.

In the nineteen-forties, Lenya became friends with the brilliant American magazine editor George Davis (played by John Scherer, who's too butch by half). A drinker and a homosexual, Davis took it upon himself to resuscitate Lenya's career (and, later, to marry her). After Weill's death, Lenya went on to star in an Off Broadway revival of "The Threepenny Opera," and to make a number of definitive recordings of his work. Murphy plays Lenya's grief as she plays most of the part: by rote, and with no discernible understanding of the emotional complexity that ran through the real woman's performances. (A valuable record of Lenya's work is G. W. Pabst's gritty 1931 film version of "Threepenny." She burns a hole in the screen with her depression and her disdain for herself and others.) Sitting on the edge of the stage, wrapped in a schmatte, Murphy's Lenya delivers a lovely but shallow rendition of "September Song," to express her sense of loss over Weill's passing, but she never manages to make it matter to us. As she finishes the song, and Davis hustles her onstage for the "Threepenny" revival—the scene that draws this show to a close—we sit in a kind of funk, imagining what "LoveMusik" *might* have been. The show as it is seems to have been inspired less by what Lenya and Weill had to say about their world than by Mel Brooks's "Springtime for Hitler." ♦

EVENTS WE DIDN'T ATTEND

From the St. Helena (Calif.) Star.

St. Helena urologist Dr. James Woolley will present the facts on basic bladder health, and Glenn Ratterree from Steves Hardware, will present advice on the basics of do-it-yourself plumbing during a free course in basic home maintenance and a lesson on the challenges of midlife bladder control.

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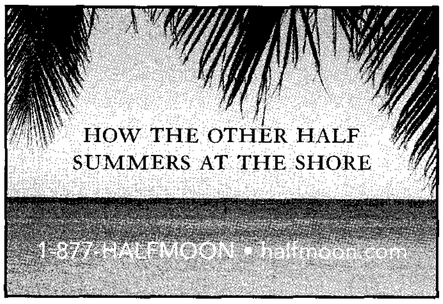

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THE ART WORLD

PERFORMANCE

Chris Burden and the limits of art.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

An efficient test of where you stand on contemporary art is whether you are persuaded, or persuadable, that Chris Burden is a good artist. I think he's pretty great. Burden is the guy who, on November 19, 1971, in Santa Ana, California, produced a classic, or an atrocity (both, to my mind), of conceptual art by getting shot. "Shoot" survives in desultory black-and-white photographs with this description: "At 7:45 P.M. I was shot in the left arm by a friend. The bullet was a copper jacket .22 long rifle. My friend was standing about fifteen feet from me." Why do such things? "I wanted to be taken seriously as an artist," Burden explained, when I visited him recently at his studio in a brushy glen of Topanga Canyon, where he lives with his wife, the sculptor Nancy Rubins. "The models were Picasso and Duchamp. I was most interested in Duchamp." Burden is a solidly fleshy, amicable man, given to arduous enthusiasms. Arrayed in ranks outside the vast, tidy studio building were more than a hundred and forty handsomely restored antique lampposts, units of an ongoing sculptural project. (Many are intended for the grounds of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, when its present expansion is completed, in 2008.) Reinstallations of two major Burdens are now on view in Southern California: "A Tale of Two Cities" (1981), a room-filling fantasy tableau of miniature metropolises at war, incorporating about five thousand toys, at the Orange County Museum of Art, in Newport Beach; and, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, in Los Angeles, "Hell Gate" (1998), a twenty-eight-foot-long scale model, in Erector and Meccano pieces and wood, of the dramatic steel-and-concrete railroad bridge that crosses the Hell Gate segment of the East River, between Queens and Wards Island. Like most things by Burden, they are powerful works that deal ingeniously with aesthetics and ethics of power. You needn't like them to be impressed.

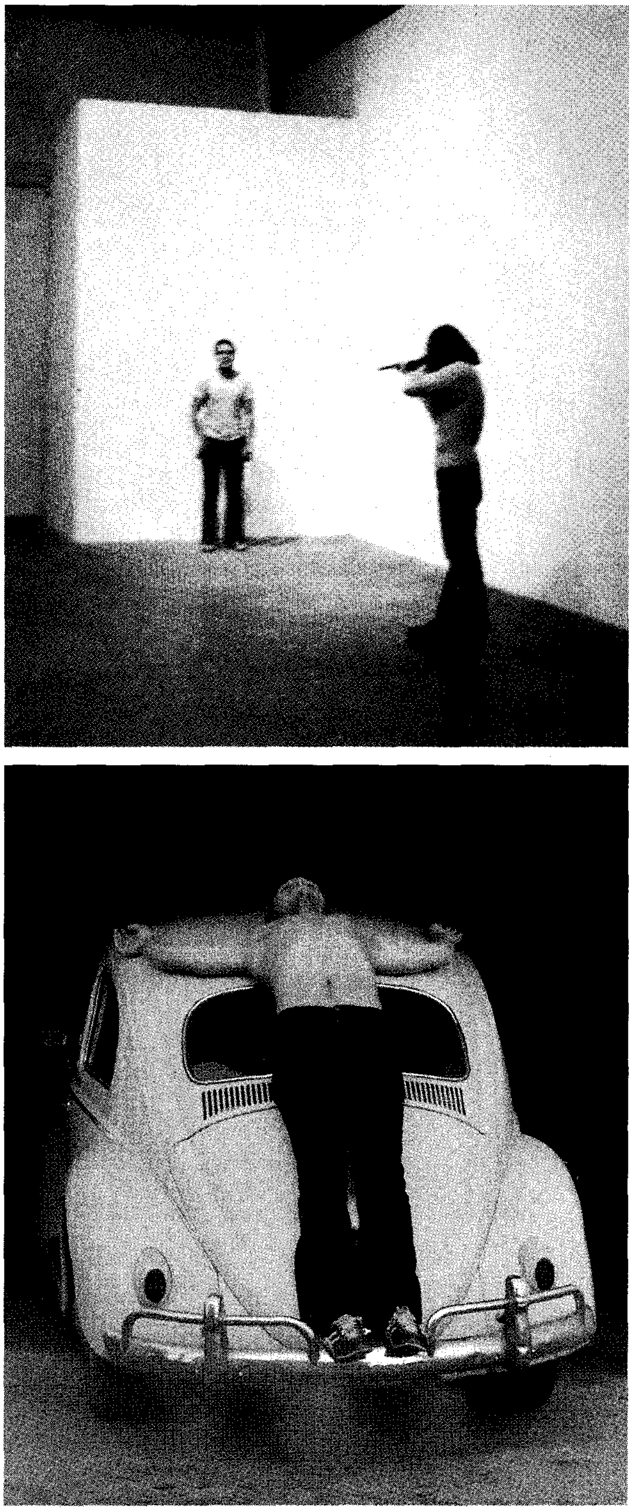
"Shoot" was one of a number of perfectly repellent performance pieces of the early nineteen-seventies in which Burden subjected himself to danger, thereby creating a double bind, for viewers, between the citizenly injunction to intervene in crises and the institutional taboo against touching art works. (Such, at any rate, was my analysis of the distinctive nausea that I felt in thinking of those things, which I avoided witnessing in person.) He spent five days in a small locker, with a bottle of water above and a bottle for urine below; slithered, nearly naked and with his hands held behind him, across fifty feet of broken glass in a parking lot; had his hands nailed to the roof of a Volkswagen; was kicked down a flight of stairs; and, on different occasions, incurred apparent risks of burning, drowning, and electrocution.

Usually performed for small audiences, these events became word-of-mouth sensations on a radically minded grapevine in art schools, new contemporary museums, and grant-funded alternative spaces—an emerging academy of the far out. Anti-commercial sentiments held sway in those circles, although not altogether heroically, given the concurrent slump in the art market and the flow of patronage from such sources as the National Endowment for the Arts. (Between 1974 and 1983, Burden received four N.E.A. grants.) Earthworks, executed in remote locations, were the conceptual art that came closest to being popular. They had in common with Burden's performances the fact that almost nobody saw them, except by way of documentation. The avant-gardism of the time wasn't only reliant on publicity; it was effectively about the mediums of information—specialized magazines, insider gossip—through which it became known. Burden strummed the network like a lyre.

Burden was born in Boston in 1946, to an engineer father and a mother who had a master's degree in biology, and he grew up in France and Italy. At the age of twelve, on the island of Elba, he was badly hurt in a motor-scooter accident, and underwent an emergency operation on his left foot, without anesthesia. It was a formative experience, he said, as was a passion for photography, which he acquired during his long recuperation. He completed high school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. At Pomona College, in Claremont, California, he declared an architecture major and studied physics, but gravitated toward art, with a special interest in Dadaism. Burden's master's thesis, at the University of California, Irvine, in 1971—where his teachers included the doyen of space-and-light installations, Robert Irwin—was the five-day locker stint.

He was immediately taken very seriously, as the most extreme and enigmatic of provocateurs in a subculture that, in highly educated ways, reflected the political disarray of the nation during the seemingly eternal Vietnam War, and prefigured the swing-barrelled rage of punk. By 1977, he had created performance pieces in two dozen American and European cities. They constituted a theatre of passive-aggressive cruelty. For one, in 1972, in Newport Beach, he sat immobile in a chair, wearing dark glasses, facing two cushions and an inviting box of marijuana cigarettes. Visitors naturally assumed that he was watching them, but the insides of his glasses were painted black, and he refused to speak. He reported, in his record of the work, "Many people tried to talk to me, one assaulted me and one left sobbing hysterically." Plainly, Burden was not in sympathy with his supposed community.

Burden's most trenchantly significant work was "Doomed," performed in April, 1975, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. He set a clock on a wall at midnight, and lay down on the floor under a leaning sheet of glass. Viewers came and went. Burden didn't move. Inevitably, he soiled his pants. ("It was awful," he recalled.) Forty-five hours and ten minutes passed. Then a young museum employee named Dennis O'Shea took it upon himself to place a container of water within Burden's reach. The artist got up, smashed the clock with a hammer, and left. He never again undertook a public action that imperilled himself. It wouldn't have made sense. "Doomed" unmasked the absurdity of the conventions by which, through assuming the role of viewers, we are both blocked and immunized from ethical responsibility. In O'Shea's case, the situation was complicated by his duty to maintain the inviolability of art works. There should be a monument to him, somewhere, which would commemorate the final calling of the bluff of art as a law unto itself. (Would Burden have lain there until he died? "Probably not," he said.) I have in mind Robert Rauschenberg's famous intention "to act in the gap between" art and life. There isn't any gap. Art is notional. There is always only life and death.


Documentation of two of Burden's early pieces: "Shoot," top, from 1971, and "Trans-fixed," from 1974.

TOP: COURTESY GAGOSIAN GALLERY; BOTTOM: COURTESY LOCUS+ARCHIVE/CHRIS BURDEN

In pragmatic terms, art is a privileged zone of gratuitous activity, with boundaries maintained by the agreement of the vested authorities. Artists of the Duchampian sort delighted in effacing the boundaries, which, with increasingly avid complicity on the authorities' part, kept being redrawn to corral the effacements. It was a silly game, in the end. Ultimate limits were discovered, most pointedly by Burden, whose influence on conceptual and installational artists, to this day, is immeasurable. He defined art, in an interview in 1975, as "a free spot in society, where you can do anything"—anything, he might have added, that society will let you do. (Dennis O'Shea wouldn't let him die.) Context is all. The complexity of Burden's attitude became clear in 2004, when he and Nancy Rubins resigned their longtime teaching positions at U.C.L.A. to protest the university's decision not to expel a student who, in a class, had played Russian roulette with a fake but real-looking gun, then had left the room and set off a firecracker in the hall. In a university, Burden said, "there are rules of speech and decorum." Some disputants in the controversy, which dragged on for months, accused him of hypocrisy. He insisted on a cardinal difference between an act performed in an art space for an audience that had been warned and one sprung on students in a classroom.

Since the late seventies, Burden has specialized in one-off wonders like "A Tale of Two Cities" (whose details yield a wealth of technological and social history) and insouciant engineering feats like "Hell Gate," as well as technological stunts involving self-designed cars, boats, and laboratory equipment. (He reconstructed a primitive early television and a nineteenth-century apparatus for measuring the speed of light.) Some works have had political content, such as a chilling response to Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial: three million Vietnamese names, symbolizing the native dead of that war, engraved on hinged copper panels. (Made in 1991, it belongs to Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art.) Others have been hoots: a rubber-band-powered model plane launched in the aisle of a Concorde in flight, to attain a ground speed of Mach 2.05 plus ten miles per hour. (Burden sells relics of such actions; in this instance, the little plane mounted in a glass case.) In his studio, he showed me a work in progress: parts of what will be a huge model city crisscrossed by roller-coasters of hundreds of track-racing toy cars. The cars will run continuously, until they wear out, at the equivalent, for their size, of well over a hundred miles an hour. (A smaller version, shown in 2004 in Kanazawa, Japan, provoked acute anxiety in its viewers, Burden remarked happily.) There is an inevitable slackness, conceptually, to these works, which colonize the "free spot" that Burden's daring carved out. The history of the avant-garde comes down to this: a boyish gimcracker diverting us by diverting himself. Worse things have happened. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

GAMES OF CHANCE

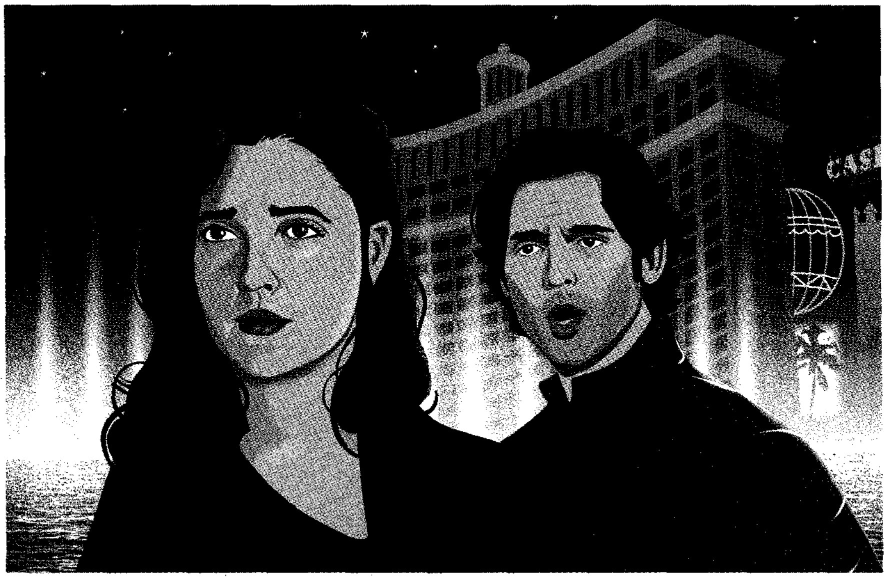
"Lucky You" and "Away from Her."

BY DAVID DENBY

ESPN, by broadcasting the World Series of Poker and other competitions over and over again (much to the dismay of parents with teen-age sons), has helped turn poker—in particular, Texas hold'em—into a national craze. In hold'em, a bruising but subtle game, each player receives just two cards down. After an initial round of betting and bluffing, the dealer turns three cards up, and then two more cards, with a round of betting between each card. The players make their hands by combining their down cards with the five "community" cards lying face up on the table. From all accounts, the fascination of the game is incomparable. The prolonged rounds of betting leave plenty of time for an outrageous bluff to steamroll the other players into folding. Much more than in older forms of poker, Texas hold'em depends on reading the other players—getting into another guy's head and, in effect, playing his hand. If you can do that, and draw all his chips onto the table, you can wipe him out in a single shot.

This kind of spontaneous depth psychology and mental bullyragging, combined with no-limits betting, dominates the good parts of "Lucky You," a new movie about the high-stakes poker world, starring Eric Bana, Drew Barrymore, and Robert Duvall. The picture takes place before and during the World Series of Poker in 2003, the year that the Internet players—the non-pros—marched in on the Las Vegas tough guys sitting in the heavily draped Bellagio casino, taking money from one another as they waited for the competition to start. The hero, Huck Cheever (Bana), is not a beginner—he's a talented Las Vegas poker brat, the son of a champion, L. C. Cheever (Duvall)—but he's a mess emotionally, and long stretches of the plot are devoted to how this hotshot keeps winning the ten grand needed to enter the series only to throw it away. Like all gambling movies, "Lucky You" is devoted to the question of what it takes to be a winner—the quality of controlled heartlessness that Huck doesn't have. The director, Curtis Hanson, has mixed the actors together with poker studs familiar from ESPN (like Sam Farha and Doyle Brunson), and the atmosphere around the tables feels right—the plug-uglies from all over the map with their dark glasses and Saturday-at-the-mall clothes, the muttered sarcasms and occasional grudging compliments, the wariness and, at the best moments, the nervy calculations. When the camera hovers at the edge of the table, the intricacies of the game take over, and the pace and tension of the play make for exciting entertainment. Unfortunately, most of "Lucky You," starting with the title, is ordinary or outright awful. Moviemakers, it seems, cannot bluff their way to success.

At first, I thought Eric Bana was well cast. In the opening sequence, the tall, strongly built Australian actor, with his dark eyes and mop of black hair, persuades a pawnbroker to lend him money for a digital camera that she probably won't be able to sell (she's already got three). The hustle, as written by Eric Roth, working with Hanson, has the fluent logic of seduction: the pawnbroker plays along because she admires Huck's virtuosity, and Bana's sincere manner closes the deal. In the rest of the movie, however, sincerity isn't much called for. Huck Cheever is a gambling addict who has hocked his possessions and stolen from his friends, and is one step away from becoming a derelict. Bana isn't a bad actor—his gentleness in violent roles ("Hulk," "Munich") is something new. But, in his late thirties, he's too old and spiritually too placid for this part: what's in his eyes is not crazy defiance but something more like pain; and what's in his body is not wired-up energy but a big man's physical confidence and ease. When he scampers around a golf course trying to win a stupid bet, he seems to be violating, not fulfilling, his nature, and your feeling for him evaporates—he just seems silly. Drew Barrymore is all wrong, too. Her Billie Offer, a would-be singer from Bakersfield, is a nice young woman with a strong moral streak (though not much of a voice). She becomes Huck's girlfriend, but his crass behavior makes her mad, and she keeps running away from him. Barrymore has her matter-of-fact sweetness and decency—she always seems to be explaining to herself how the world works—and her Billie be-



Drew Barrymore and Eric Bana in Curtis Hanson's new movie.

BEN KIRCHNER

longs in front of a sixth-grade class, not in Vegas. She's drawn not to the gambler in Huck but to the responsible man she would like him to be—a disastrous basis for a love affair, and a stuffy idea for a movie romance.

"Lucky You," with its only-in-Vegas rituals, its obsessed characters hanging out in the corners of rooms, its flavorsome patter and invective, takes you into a highly specialized world. When L.C., deck in hand, goes one on one with Huck at a lunch counter, goading him, matching wits, the episode has the same tension and verve as the poker-table scenes. Duvall, with his mocking irony and slit-eyed stare, is in good form: he has the veiled manipulativeness of a lifetime gambler. But the rivalry and mutual resentment of father and son is tired stuff from a night-school course in dramaturgy. Will Huck resolve his Oedipal struggle? Will he grow up and win Billie's love? These people aren't complicated enough for us to care, and the filmmakers blow what's left of their cool with such devices as having the young lovers watch the fountains spurt at the Bellagio, and Barrymore say, "You know what I think? I think everybody's just trying not to be lonely." The movie lacks the emotional vividness of a gambling classic like "The Hustler" (1961), with its acrid melancholy and romantic bitterness, its searing performances by Paul Newman, George C. Scott, and Piper Laurie. In a recent interview, Norman Mailer, who plays Texas hold'em in mock cutthroat battles with his children, said that ruthlessness was at the heart of the game, but the obsessive airing of poker on ESPN may have domesticated it too much—made it too much a family-marketing triumph—to inspire ruthless filmmaking. At key moments, "Lucky You" loses its nerve.

Julie Christie is now sixty-six, but her face hasn't lost its beautiful definition—the downward-turning mouth, the slightly pointed chin, the eyes that can explode with wrath. Her temperament hasn't fallen out of shape, either. As Fiona, an Ontario woman succumbing to Alzheimer's in "Away from Her," she can seem lost one moment but then, as an intention pierces through her cloud of unhappiness, crisp and incisive. After voluntarily entering a deluxe nursing home, Fiona has taken an interest in another patient, Aubrey (Michael Murphy), who sits in silence and misery and seems to need her. When her husband of forty-four years, Grant (Gordon Pinsent), shows up to visit her, she treats him as if he, too, were one of the patients. Watching this, we're not sure that she isn't teasing or taking revenge against Grant, who has committed sins against her in the past. Her friendliness is puzzling—merely social, almost impersonal—and possibly touched with malice. As her memory loss worsens, Fiona wonders if she isn't beginning to disappear, but, when she comes back into focus, Christie, turning a medical condition into a dramatic coup, makes it impossible for us to feel merely sorry for Fiona. That toughness gives "Away from Her" the abrupt, challenging intelligence of a fresh exploratory work rather than the soft piteousness of, say, a "Movie of the Week" from 1973.

The fading of memory, the anguish of losing the contours and the colors of the physical world, the mixture of loyalty and selfishness in the elderly—these are not subjects you would expect a young filmmaker to understand or even to take much interest in. Yet "Away from Her," based on the Alice Munro story "The Bear Came Over the Mountain" (first published in this magazine in 1999), was written and directed by Sarah Polley, a Canadian actress who is still in her twenties. The movie, Polley's feature début, is a small-scale triumph that could herald a great career. In general, she works close to her actors, and is confident enough to let scenes remain ambiguous—the meanings build slowly, by accretion. But she also demonstrates an impressive feeling for the spiritual meaning of landscape, as when Fiona, on skis, finds herself isolated in the snow and, looking around at the open fields, experiences the terror of a life without signposts. Apart from a few scenes, Polley, like Munro, tells the story from the point of view of Grant, a retired professor, who, in the person of the veteran Canadian actor Gordon Pinsent, has a capacious gut, a fine beard, and the burnished aspect of an aging lion. Grant loves his wife, and is baffled by her absorption into another man's need. He trails around after the new couple, unsure of his rights, indignant but aware of the absurdity of indignation. With the aid of Aubrey's wife, a practical old broad (played with pitch-perfect ruefulness by Olympia Dukakis), Grant finds a way for personal survival and a love for someone lost to flourish together. ♦

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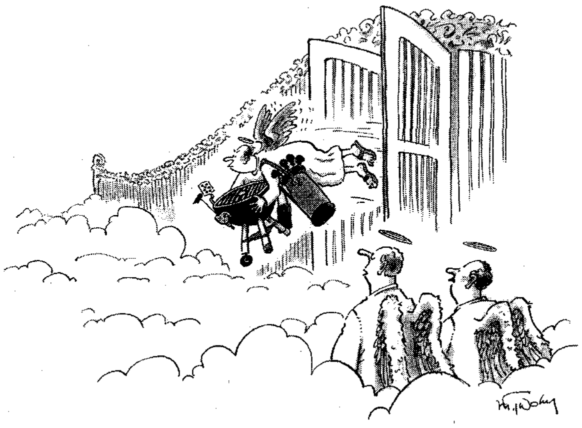
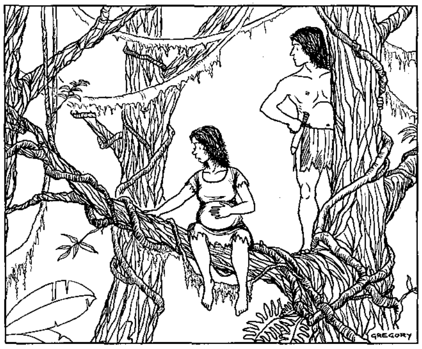
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by P. C. Vey, must be received by Sunday, May 13th. Finalists in the April 30th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the May 28th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"So you can take it with you!"
Gale Davis, Zephyr Cove, Nev.



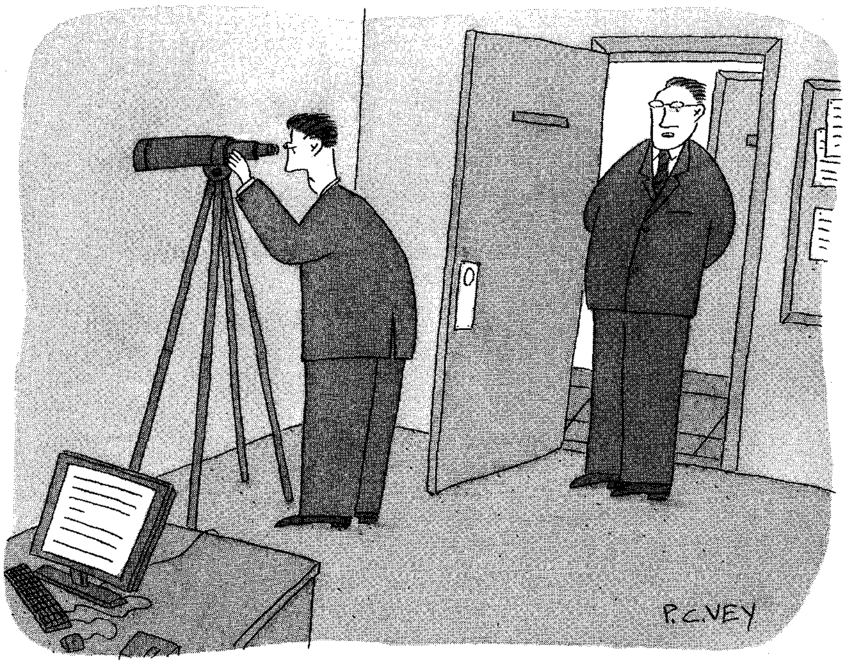
THE FINALISTS

"Fine. If it's a boy, we'll call him Boy. But if it's a girl I want to call her McKenzie."
Fairleigh Brooks, Louisville, Ky.

"Well, you'll be a monkey's uncle."
Matthew Palmer, Arlington, Va.

"I guess I always assumed we'd raise Dylan in the city."
Graham Reed, Brooklyn, N.Y.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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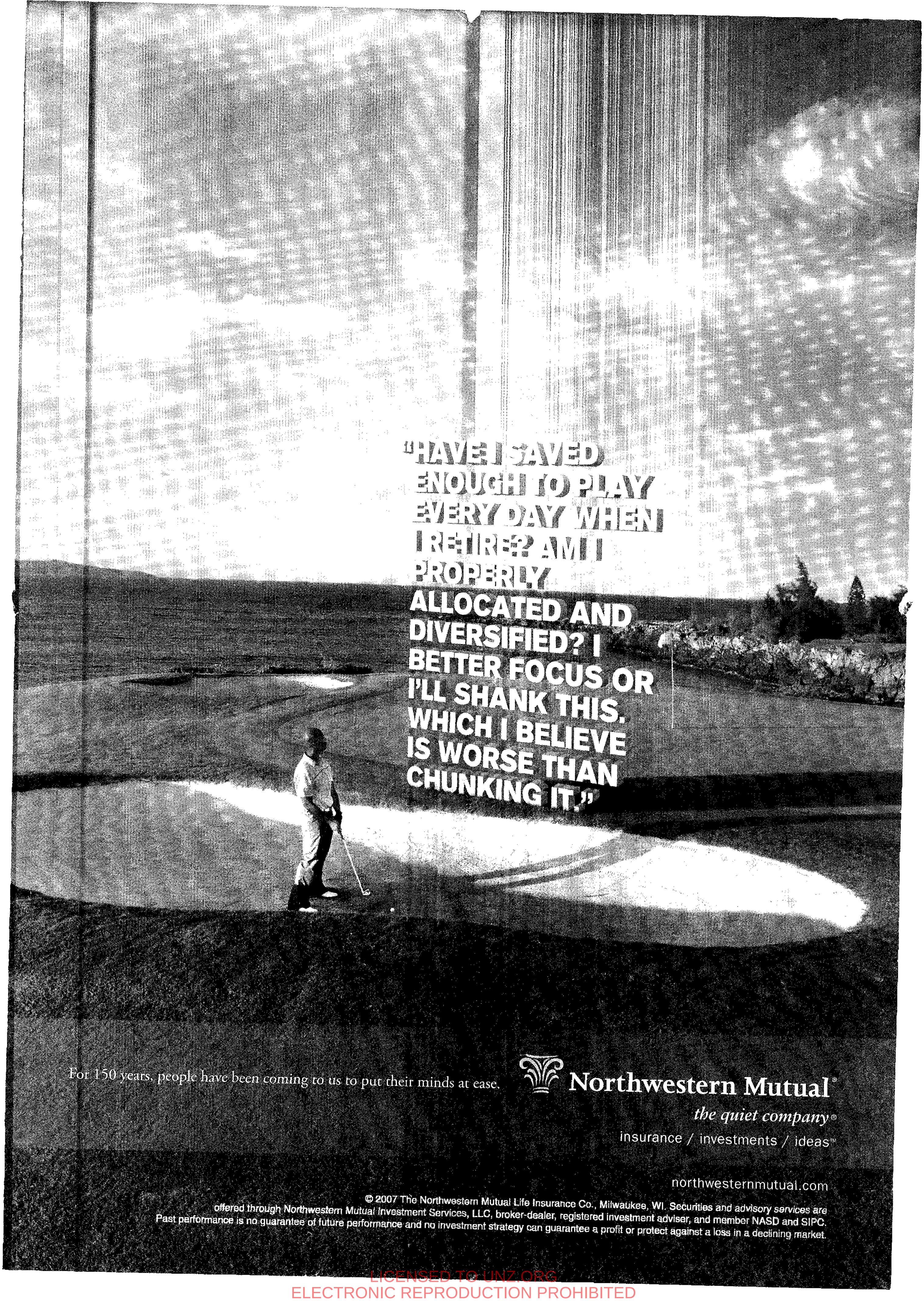
"HAVE I SAVED ENOUGH TO PLAY EVERY DAY WHEN I RETIRE? AM I PROPERLY ALLOCATED AND DIVERSIFIED? I BETTER FOCUS OR I'LL SHANK THIS. WHICH I BELIEVE IS WORSE THAN CHUNKING IT."

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“If I had not been in the car I was in, I probably wouldn’t be alive today.”

A MAJOR COLLISION WITH A TRACTOR-TRAILER GAVE PAULA VARSALONA AN ALTOGETHER NEW APPRECIATION FOR MERCEDES-BENZ ENGINEERING.

Paula Varsalona

The truck stopped in front of her without warning. Traffic was moving fast and there was no time to react. The damage to her S 600 was severe. “When I looked at the car, I was speechless. I couldn’t believe I was able to walk away from the accident. My Mercedes saved my life.” The front end of the vehicle absorbed the tremendous impact, shielding Paula from the twisting wreckage. Today, she is an S-Class advocate through and through.

For decades, this sedan has been proclaimed the epitome of automotive safety. And the newest generation of this heralded vehicle has elevated industry standards to an even higher level. Besides the sheer strength of the S-Class, it is equipped with some of the most sophisticated safety technology ever.

Before, during and after an accident, the vehicle performs dozens of intricately coordinated steps to shield occupants from possible danger. It is all part of the Mercedes-Benz safety philosophy known as PRO-SAFE.™

In a situation where vehicle dynamics suggest that an accident is imminent, the front passenger seat automatically adjusts to a more favorable position, front seat belts tighten, fuel flow is cut, and the Emergency Response Center is immediately contacted. These are only some of the measures taken.

And while the circumstances of Paula’s story are personal, her sentiment is shared by many: “I love all the luxury and the performance. I love the style of my S-Class. But for me, safety is number one. That is why my husband and I only drive Mercedes.”

THE 2007 S-CLASS. *Over one hundred years of Mercedes-Benz safety innovation showcased in a single automobile.*

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Model shown 2007 S 550 with AMG Sport Package.

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